

“A man very well studyed”

# Intersections

Yearbook for Early Modern Studies

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Religiosus Medicus Dæmon oratus Dæmonas.

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# “A man very well studyed”

New Contexts for Thomas Browne

*Edited by*

Kathryn Murphy and Richard Todd



B R I L L

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2008

*Illustration on the cover:* Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici*, title-page with annotations. Cambridge University Library C.1.33(1).

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The cover image, reproduced as frontispiece, shows the title-page of the anonymous 1642 edition of *Religio Medici*, annotated by Jonathan Carpenter of Pembroke College, Oxford, to read ‘*Religiosus Medicus θαῦμα ὄντως θαῦμαστόν*’ (a religious physician, a wonder truly wondrous). It is reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library, from a copy at shelfmark C.1.33(1) in Cambridge University Library.

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Claire Preston’s “Of Cyder and Sallets: The Hortulan Saints and *The Garden of Cyrus*” is a version of the article of the same name, published in *Literature Compass* 3 (2006) 867–883, and is printed here by the kind permission of Blackwell Publishing.

Eric Achermann’s contribution was originally published in German as “Ordnung im Wirbel. Knorr von Rosenroth als Kompilator und Übersetzer von Thomas Browne, Jean d’Espagnet, Henry More, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz und Antoine Le Grand”, *Morgen-Glantz* 13 (2003) 205–282, and is printed here in translation, abridged, by kind permission of the publishers, Peter Lang AG, and the author.

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Many of the papers gathered here originated at two conferences: “Four Centuries of Thomas Browne”, held at the University of Leiden from 26 October–28 October 2005, and the first Thomas Browne Seminar, held at Birkbeck College, London on 8 April 2006. Thanks are due to the organizers and all participants. Reid Barbour and Claire Preston, editors of *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed* (Oxford: 2008), and Kevin Killeen have been particularly generous with responses to queries. Doris Einsiedel volunteered aid on a difficult task of translation, and Oliver Thomas checked classical languages and helped in many other ways besides. Throughout the preparation of this book, it has been a pleasure to be a part of the willing exercise of what Browne called ‘the cheapest way of beneficence’ – the exchange of knowledge – in the Browne scholars’ community in learning.



## NOTE ON THE TEXT

There has not been a new complete edition of Browne since 1964, and the choice of texts which currently faces scholars reflects this. The best available edition of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* was edited by Robin Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford: 1981), and has been used throughout the volume, except where attention has turned to the editions published in Browne's lifetime. For the other major texts, contributors have used one of two editions, which have equally good claims to authority: Geoffrey Keynes's *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964), or L.C. Martin's *Religio Medici and other works* (Oxford: 1964). It will be made explicit in each essay which of these is the main source of quotations. Contributors refer to *Urne-Buriall*, rather than *Hydriotaphia*. All dates, unless explicitly stated otherwise, are given in new style.

## ABBREVIATIONS

*ODNB* Matthew H.C.G. – Harrison B. (general eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: 2004–2008).  
*OED* Simpson J. (general ed.), *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: 1989–2008).  
*PE* *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*.



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## INTRODUCTION



## ‘BETWEEN THE PAWS OF A SPHINX’: THE CONTEXTS OF THOMAS BROWNE

Kathryn Murphy

Writing in 1906, Lytton Strachey suggested contexts in which the works of Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682) might best be read. ‘One could read him floating down the Euphrates, or past the shores of Arabia’, he wrote, ‘and it would be pleasant to open the *Vulgar Errors* in Constantinople, or to get by heart a chapter of the *Christian Morals* between the paws of a Sphinx’.<sup>1</sup> Nestling between the Sphinx’s paws may once have seemed an appropriately enigmatic setting in which to contemplate prose which, as Virginia Woolf observed, brought ‘the remote and incongruous astonishingly together’.<sup>2</sup> It brings into question, however, the relationship between Browne’s writings and his own time and place. The history of twentieth-century scholarship on Browne might be described as his slow extraction from a comfortable incumbency between the paws of the Sphinx.<sup>3</sup> For Woolf, Strachey and their contemporaries, Browne was a lovable curiosity; the affection for his eccentricity is plain in Woolf’s famous dictum that ‘[f]ew people love the writings of Sir Thomas Browne, but those who do are of the salt of the earth’.<sup>4</sup> The old orthodoxy in Browne scholarship held, meanwhile, that he was a man without context. Divorced from his time, unmarked by the civil strife through which he lived, he penned his antiquarian works of sesquipedalian quaintness in the seclusion of his Norwich study, interrupted only by the importunities of uroscopy and the medical complaints of persons from Norfolk who would not

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<sup>1</sup> Strachey L., ‘Sir Thomas Browne’, in *Books and Characters French and English* (London: 1924) 27–38, here 38. The article was first published as a review of Edmund Gosse’s *Sir Thomas Browne* in 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Woolf V., ‘Sir Thomas Browne’, in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. A. McNeillie, 4 vols (London: 1988) 3.368–372, here 370. The essay was originally published as a review in the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1923.

<sup>3</sup> What follows is a necessarily partial account of the fortunes of Browne in the twentieth century. For fuller details see the bibliography gathered at the close of this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Woolf V., ‘Sir Thomas Browne’ 368.

leave his hours of composition unmolested. As Philip Major points out in his essay in this volume, critics in this vein have often suggested that Browne deliberately cultivated detachment from his context. Edmund Gosse claimed there was an ‘absence of almost all allusion to the Civil War’ in Browne’s writings;<sup>5</sup> half a century later, Joan Bennett commented that ‘there is nothing in his published writings to remind us of the Civil War’.<sup>6</sup> Even in 1982 it was possible to write that Browne ‘represents a sensibility that chooses not to relate itself to the turbulence of the age’.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence, much of the best twentieth-century work on Browne focussed on classifying and analysing the sonorities of his style.<sup>8</sup>

The latter part of the century saw a change of emphasis. In Stanley Fish’s influential essay “The Bad Physician”, the valorization of the old orthodoxy – which delighted in the ‘warmth of Browne’s personality’ which ‘shone through’ his work<sup>9</sup> – was turned on its head.<sup>10</sup> Browne’s playfulness in *Religio Medici* was taken to be irresponsible rather than charming; his avoidance of controversy or context not conciliatory and eirenic, but cynically evasive. Rather than the good doctor of Norwich, Browne became the “bad physician” in Fish’s schema of seventeenth-century literary affect. Subsequent critics, more sympathetic to Browne, have called Fish’s refusal to enjoy Browne’s ingenuities puritanical.<sup>11</sup> It was Puritanism of another sort which dominated in an article that fundamentally changed the old orthodoxy on *Religio Medici* in particular and on Browne’s works in general. Michael Wilding’s “*Religio Medici* in the English Civil War”, first published in 1982, pointed out that apparent abstention and retirement from politics is in itself political,

<sup>5</sup> Gosse E., *Sir Thomas Browne* (London: 1905) 102.

<sup>6</sup> Bennett J., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Man of Achievement in Literature*’ (Cambridge: 1962) 1.

<sup>7</sup> Jefferson D.W., “‘Pitch beyond Ubiquity’: Thought and Style in Sir Thomas Browne”, in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne: The Ann Arbor Tercentenary Lectures and Essays* (Columbia, MO and London: 1982) 143–154, here 154.

<sup>8</sup> The doyen of stylistic criticism was Morris Croll; see Croll M., *Style, Rhetoric and Rhythm* (Princeton, NJ: 1966). For a useful summary of the Croll tradition, see Havenstein D., *Democratizing Sir Thomas Browne: Religio Medici and Its Imitations* (Oxford: 1999) 88–103.

<sup>9</sup> Roston M., “The ‘Doubting’ Thomas”, in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne* 69–80, here 69.

<sup>10</sup> Fish S., “The Bad Physician: The Case of Sir Thomas Browne”, in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley, CA: 1972) 353–373.

<sup>11</sup> See Warnke F., “A Hook for Amphibium: Some Reflections on Fish” in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne* 49–59; see also Huebert R., “The Private Opinions of Sir Thomas Browne”, *Studies in English Literature* 45 (2005) 117–134.

and particularly so in the charged environment of Civil War England. He identified various tropes of Royalism in the changes Browne made to *Religio Medici* in 1643.<sup>12</sup> Since then, a steady succession of critics has combed Browne's works for traces of Royalist sympathies, survivalist tropes, and monarchical imagery. The commitments, or deliberate avoidance of them, of *Religio Medici*, have been successively analysed;<sup>13</sup> the relationship of *Urn-Buriall* to the politics of ritual under the Commonwealth and Protectorate has been expertly explored;<sup>14</sup> submerged significances latent but legible in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* have been exposed.<sup>15</sup>

This fertile line of inquiry continues to bear fruit. Several essays in this volume contribute to it, offering a new reading of the subtexts of *Urn-Buriall*, a first reading of *Repertorium* in the light of confessional nostalgia and the rebuilding of the Church of England at the Restoration, an exposure of the politics of play and fecundity in *Garden of Cyrus*, and of the political significance of Browne's attitude to melancholy.<sup>16</sup> The more reactive contextualization of the new orthodoxy, however, necessary as it has been, has sometimes been too keen to taxonomize Browne precisely within the political and intellectual discourses of his day.<sup>17</sup> Pigeonholing Browne has until recently been a preoccupation, and asking '[i]n what category should Browne be placed?' has elicited a bewilderingly broad and sometimes contradictory range of answers.<sup>18</sup> Given his undeniable interest in the observation of nature, conducting experiments, and advances in medical and botanical knowledge,

<sup>12</sup> Wilding M., "Religio Medici in the English Civil War" in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne* 100–114. This was reprinted as a chapter in Wilding M., *Dragon's Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution* (Oxford: 1985) 89–113.

<sup>13</sup> See e.g. Post J., "Browne's Revision of *Religio Medici*", *Studies in English Literature* 25 (1985) 145–163; Berensmeyer I., "Rhetoric, Religion and Politics in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*", *Studies in English Literature* 46 (2006) 113–132.

<sup>14</sup> Guibbory A., "A rational of old Rites": Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Buriall* and the Conflict over Ceremony", *The Yearbook of English Studies* 21 (1991) 229–241.

<sup>15</sup> Killeen K., *Biblical Scholarship, Science and Politics in Early Modern Culture: Thomas Browne and the Thorny Place of Knowledge* (Aldershot: forthcoming 2008).

<sup>16</sup> See the essays by Philip Major, Kevin Killeen, Claire Preston and Karen Edwards in this volume.

<sup>17</sup> The best earlier collections focussing on Browne's intellectual contexts, which mostly avoid this categorizing drive, are Cawley R.R. – Yost G. (eds.), *Studies in Sir Thomas Browne* (Eugene, OR: 1965), and Schoeck R.J. (ed.), *Sir Thomas Browne and the Republic of Letters*. *English Language Notes* 19 (1982).

<sup>18</sup> The quotation is from Hall M.B., "Thomas Browne Naturalist" in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne* 178–187, here 179, but the question implicitly underlies much criticism.

Browne has been portrayed as naturalist, scientist, Ancient, Modern, Aristotelian, and Neoplatonist, both 'thoroughly Baconian' and having 'little or no interest' in Bacon.<sup>19</sup>

Recent work on Browne has suggested that our account of Browne's contexts must be more complicated and nuanced, reflecting a recent resurgence of interest in Browne spurred by the quatercentenary of his birth, and the publication of Claire Preston's *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science*, both in 2005.<sup>20</sup> The renewed attention to Browne has opened up a range of new contexts in which to consider him: both those from which he wrote, and those in which he was read. Preston's association of Browne with the discourses of early modern civility and intellectual curiosity has presented a much more textured sense of the communities of like-minded gentlemen who corresponded with him and for whom he often wrote. Contrary to Strachey's statement that '[t]he life of Sir Thomas Browne does not afford much scope for the biographer', the discoveries of recent scholarship encourage hope that more suggestive detail might yet be uncovered, potentially resolving vexed questions about Browne's life.<sup>21</sup> Recent discoveries on the readers of *Religio Medici* in manuscript suggest a more complicated political picture for the publication of that work than has been thought.<sup>22</sup> And the works assembled here suggest a number of new ways of reading and thinking about Browne's relationship to his age: whether by giving a close account of the circumstances in which he lived; or examining his less studied works, his manuscripts, or his revision practices in successive editions of his published writings; or by setting his familiar works – *Religio Medici*, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, *Urne-Buriall (Hydriotaphia)*, *The Garden*

<sup>19</sup> The last verdicts are from Walters F.D., "A Strategy for Writing the *Impossibilium: Aporia* in Sir Thomas Browne's *The Garden of Cyrus*", *Prose Studies* 18 (1995) 19–35, here 19; Hall M.B., "Thomas Browne Naturalist" 185.

<sup>20</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005). Browne's quatercentenary was marked by a conference, "Four Centuries of Thomas Browne", held at the University of Leiden from 26–28 October 2005, from which some of the essays gathered here derive.

<sup>21</sup> Strachey L., "Sir Thomas Browne" 27. Reid Barbour, currently engaged on an intellectual biography of Browne, recently discovered the subject of Browne's doctoral dissertation: see Barbour R., "The Topic of Sir Thomas Browne's Dissertation", *Notes & Queries* 54 (2007) 38–39, and his essay in this volume. Biographies to date include Finch J., *Sir Thomas Browne: a Doctor's Life of Science and Faith* (New York: 1950) and Huntley F.L., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1962). The best and most suggestive account of Browne's life is Robin Robbins's *ODNB* article.

<sup>22</sup> See Murphy K., "'A man of excellent parts': The Manuscript Readers of Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*", *Times Literary Supplement* 5492 (4 July 2008) 14–15.

of *Cyrus* – in unfamiliar or previously unconsidered contexts; or by considering his translators and readers.<sup>23</sup>

This volume moves from biographical studies of the environments in which Browne lived (part I), through the circumstances and procedures of the composition of his works (part II), through the intellectual (part III) and political (part IV) contexts of those works themselves, and finally to the contexts in which those works were read (part V). The first section of this volume presents work which deepens our understanding of Browne's stay in Leiden. Reid Barbour explores the context in which Browne found himself when he matriculated at Leiden University in 1633, detailing the medical, theological and moral ethos of Leiden and its university. He also elaborates on his recent discovery that the topic of Browne's doctoral thesis was smallpox. Harm Beukers asks why Browne would have chosen Leiden for his doctoral examination, focussing on the medical faculty at Leiden University, the curriculum and criteria to which Browne would have been expected to conform, and relating Browne's experiences to the typical course of study of British students in Leiden. In part II, Antonia Moon investigates the evidence for Browne's reading and writing contained in unpublished notebooks in the British Library, and suggestively compares Browne's strategies with other keepers of notebooks and commonplace books. Working from revisions to *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* in its six editions from 1646 to 1672, Hugh Adlington shows Browne's blue pencil at work, and links his writing on divination to the literary intuition of philological correction.

The subsequent two sections explore new ways of reading individual works by Browne, placing him in relation to the political and intellectual contexts of his time. Brent Nelson suggests a generic parallel for *Urne-Buriall* in works of occasional meditation, and reads that work's emphasis on ignorance and oblivion as a devotionally inflected trope. Siobhán Collins and Louise Denmead explore the originality of the chapters devoted to blackness in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, and the intertwining of discourses of race, alchemy and the microcosmic view of the human body. Turning to the fertile ground of Browne's relationship to horticultural treatises, Claire Preston explores the relationship between Browne's depiction of nature and contemporary ideas of the Fall, and

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<sup>23</sup> See also the essays collected in Barbour R. – Preston C. (eds.), *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed* (Oxford: 2008).

the human capacity to work towards perfecting the fallen world. In a fresh reading of the *The Garden of Cyrus*, Preston shows how its rhetorical profusion is inflected by the political problems of games and maying in the mid-seventeenth century.

This political dimension is continued in the fourth section of this volume. Kevin Killeen's essay examines *Repertorium*, one of Browne's lesser known works: an architectural and antiquarian tour of Norwich Cathedral which Killeen situates in the context of Restoration religion and politics. In a complementary discussion, Philip Major continues the excellent work of recent decades on the submerged political imagery of Browne's writings by tracing Royalist tropes in *Repertorium* and *Umbra-Buriall*, linking Browne to his contemporaries John Whitefoot (1610–1699) and Henry Vaughan (1621–1695). Karen Edwards, returning to the importance of learned medicine for interpretation of Browne's texts, sets his attitude to melancholy against the context of seventeenth-century discourses on the humours and passions, and suggests the relevance of this to the political turmoil of the mid-century.

The final section of this collection examines the contexts of Browne's works in the hands of readers. Mary-Ann Lund examines the relationship between the two parts of the title of *Religio Medici*: how does Browne's writing explore the role of the spiritual physician, and the pious doctor? Her essay presents new material on Browne's reputation in the later seventeenth-century and like Killeen's work, usefully situates Browne in the Restoration. Eric Achermann's essay examines the appropriation of Browne by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1631–1689), a German scholar, Hebraist and pietistic poet, who published a translation of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* in 1680, interpolating a range of other texts to make of Browne's catalogue of errors a tendentious response to Descartes. The final essay in the volume, by Kathryn Murphy, uses evidence from the Hartlib Archive and other correspondence to suggest something of the significance of Browne for his contemporaries, and to situate him within the mid-seventeenth-century commonwealth of learning.

This volume thus suggests fruitful new ways of considering Browne, and thickens the texture of the background against which we read his works. Among the pathways for future study indicated by these essays are studies of Browne's unpublished notebooks and manuscript writings; of his revising practices;<sup>24</sup> and studies of his reception, both in England

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<sup>24</sup> In addition to the work of Michael Wilding and Jonathan Post, Brooke Conti

and on the Continent.<sup>25</sup> Just over 100 years after the first publication of *Religio Medici*, the *Biographia Britannica* article on Browne was in no doubt about the book's provocative nature, claiming '[t]here was hardly ever a book published in Britain, that made more noise than the *Religio Medici* [...] [F]ew things have been more commended on one hand, or on the other now eagerly censured.'<sup>26</sup> Yet the noise that *Religio Medici* and Browne's other works made is now only faintly heard, and deserves to be listened to more carefully. Browne's text acted as a barometer of religious opinion in the many contexts in which it was read in the seventeenth century, passing through 13 editions in English, seven in Latin, three in Dutch (in two separate translations) and one in French.<sup>27</sup> *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Browne's most substantial work of scholarship, was published six times in English in his lifetime, and translated into Latin, Dutch, German, and Danish.<sup>28</sup> As the frontispiece to this volume shows, some readers were keen to record their opinions of Browne's works in the blank spaces left by his work: Jonathan Carpenter, the annotator, declares Browne the religious physician, in Greek, to be a 'wonder truly wondrous'. The notes by Thomas Keck and Levin Nicolaus von Moltke (d. 1663) supplied in later editions of his works have yet to

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has recently studied the copy of Browne's *Religio Medici* which he marked up for the press in 1643: "Sir Thomas Browne's Annotated Copy of his 1642 *Religio Medici*", *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 67 (2006) 595–610. See also Carter J., "Sir Thomas Browne's Autograph Corrections", *The Library*, Series 4,19 (1939) 492–493. Other than Adlington's essay in this volume, however, study of the corrections to other works has not been thoroughly carried out.

<sup>25</sup> Few studies have hitherto been devoted to Browne's reception. Havenstein's *Democratizing Sir Thomas Browne* is an honourable exception. Geoffrey Keynes's *Bibliography of the Works of Sir Thomas Browne, Kt., M.D.*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: 1968), offers a partial list of references to Browne in printed works. Otherwise, attention has focussed on the responses to *Religio Medici* by Alexander Ross and Sir Kenelm Digby: see Bennett J., "A Note on *Religio Medici* and Some of its Critics", *Studies in the Renaissance* 3 (1956) 175–184; Wise T.N., *Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici and two seventeenth-century critics* (Columbia, MO: 1973); Huebert R., "The Private Opinions of Sir Thomas Browne", *Studies in English Literature* 45 (2005) 117–136.

<sup>26</sup> "Sir Thomas Browne", in *Biographia Britannica* (London: 1748) 2.994. The contributor was James Campbell: see Rivers I., "Biographical Dictionaries and their Uses from Bayle to Chalmers", in Rivers I. (ed.), *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays* (London and New York: 2001) 135–163.

<sup>27</sup> See Keynes G., *Bibliography*.

<sup>28</sup> Only the Dutch and German translations were published; the Danish remains in manuscript in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, while the Latin translation by Isaac Gruter was lost. On the German translation, see Eric Achermann's article in this volume.

receive attention, let alone the comments left by readers in manuscript in the margins of their books and commonplace books.<sup>29</sup>

The essays by Kevin Killeen, Hugh Adlington and Mary Ann Lund address another context of Browne's writings which has been neglected: the Restoration. The major works were first published between 1642 and 1658, and the neat coincidence of these years with the period of the Civil Wars, Commonwealth and Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell has classified Browne as a mid-century figure, closely related even in his antipathy to the turmoil of those years. Browne however lived and continued writing until 1682. The *Christian Morals*, some of the *Miscellany Tracts*, *Repertorium*, and, as Mary Ann Lund suggests in her article in this volume, *Letter to a Friend*, can all be attributed to this later period, though they were not published until after Browne's death.

When William Rand wrote to Samuel Hartlib in 1651 to say that Thomas Browne was a man 'very well studied', he meant that Browne had himself spent much time gathering knowledge – something which none of his readers would deny.<sup>30</sup> The essays gathered here wrench his phrase towards a more modern sense. Rather than studying him by the Euphrates or the Nile, the scholars assembled in this volume have focussed on the contemporary contexts in which Browne wrote and was read. In addition to supplying examples of ways in which Browne's works can be well studied and read in their own world, they suggest the richness of possible contexts that world provides, and gesture towards further fruitful ways of reading Browne in context.

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<sup>29</sup> Keck's comments were first printed in the London edition of 1656; von Moltke's in the Latin edition printed at Strasburg in 1652. Dean Christopher Wren's extensive annotations to *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* are preserved in a copy in the Bodleian Library, shelfmark O2.26 Art.Seld.; see Colie R., "Dean Wren's Marginalia and Early Science at Oxford", *Bodleian Library Record* VI/4 (1960) 541–551.

<sup>30</sup> William Rand to Samuel Hartlib, 1 September 1651, *The Hartlib Papers*, Sheffield University Library, CD-Rom edition (Ann Arbor, MI: 1993); 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: 1995) 62/27/1A-4B, here 1A. See the essay by Kathryn Murphy in this volume.

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PART I  
BROWNE IN LEIDEN



## DISCIPLINE AND PRAXIS: THOMAS BROWNE IN LEIDEN

Reid Barbour

On 3 December 1633, Thomas Browne matriculated at the University of Leiden as a twenty-nine-year-old medical student from London whose residence in the Netherlands was the home of Richard Monck on the Sonneveldsteeg. From this occasion, he would receive the benefit of exemption from certain taxes on wine and beer, plus freedom from Dutch tolls on the transport of books, clothes, and furniture. As part of the University's attempt to preserve order while encouraging an international student body, he would have sworn obedience 'to the statutes and university authorities'.<sup>1</sup>

On 21 December Browne received his M.D. from Professor Adolph Vorstius (1597–1665). It is possible, then, that Browne was in Leiden for just a month. 'A small Time and less Learning will suffice to make one a Graduate', James Howell (?1594–1666) scoffed of Leiden in 1619, 'nor are those Formalities of Habits, and other Decencies here, as with you [in Oxford], much less those Exhibitions and Supports for Scholars, with other Encouragements'.<sup>2</sup> It is also possible that having resided and studied in Leiden for a substantial portion of 1633, he matriculated only once he was prepared to pay the fee for official status on the way to receiving his degree. Whenever Browne arrived in Leiden in 1633, his matriculation and graduation took place during a severely cold spell. As Sir William Brereton (1604–1661) noted in his Dutch travels of 1634, the winter of 1633–1634 was especially harsh; university records tell us that classes had to be delayed because of the excessive cold, and Brereton remembered that in and around Dort (*i.e.* Dordrecht), there was

a terrible flood last winter, which put this town and all the inhabitants of the country in great fear. It overflowed their banks, which are twelve yards

<sup>1</sup> Ruestow E.G., *Physics at Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Leiden: Philosophy and the New Science in the University* (The Hague: 1973) 4; theology students had to swear fidelity to orthodox Calvinism.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Grafton A., *Athenae Batavae: The Research Imperative at Leiden, 1575–1650* (Leiden: 2003) 5.

high [...] It drowned abundance of cattle in the country [...] [I]t came also into the streets of Rotterdam, and into the houses a yard deep.<sup>3</sup>

Given these weather reports, it is likely that Browne awaited the 1634 thaw before heading home to England.

The Dutch insistence that all their industry was ‘nothing without God’ derived from what Simon Schama has characterized as the country’s paradoxical moral geography. Whatever the truth of Erasmus’s conviction that the Dutch ‘think more of moral excellence than excellence in scholarship’, most visitors contrasted their ‘straightforward nature’ with the wily stratagems of the Italians; yet moral earnestness was born from a conviction of ceaseless struggle with the ‘moral ambiguity of good fortune’, and in the regulation of excess. Cleanliness and discipline were understood to mount constant contest against the unpredictable tides of the surrounding waters, and the Dutch ‘unrefined literalness’ embodied constant efforts to keep souls, bodies, and social spaces purified in the face of what hostile critics joked was the ‘amphibious baseness’ of the fenny world in which the Dutch lived.<sup>4</sup> For Browne, a metaphorical concern with amphibian man would be featured in *Religio Medici*, but a more literal sense of the notion would follow him throughout the bulk of his adult life in Norfolk, where dwelling on the threshold between land and water was as imaginatively stimulating as it was a matter for technological concern. In the 1620s and 1630s, the Dutch resistance to the liabilities of prosperity was manifested in a wide range of cultural phenomena, from the flourishing of still life (in which the plain was rendered artistic) to the ‘ample but not opulent’ diet prescribed for Leiden students in 1632 and epitomized by a stew called the *hutspot*. With its ‘fairly generous proportions of fish and meat’, its specifications for weekly beer, bread, cheese, butter, and (on Sunday) a roast, the Leiden University diet afforded its charges with what the Dutch considered a ‘daily sufficiency’.<sup>5</sup>

Visitors to Leiden were apt to point out that the city was neat, attractive, and elegant, but that neither it nor its environs offered much in the way of distraction. But English travellers such as Browne were especially disappointed with the architecture of the university, for it

<sup>3</sup> Brereton W., *Travels in Holland, the United Provinces, England, Scotland and Ireland MDCXXXIV–MDCXXXV* (Manchester: 1844) 14.

<sup>4</sup> Schama S., *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: 1987) 7, 24, 44, 265, 384.

<sup>5</sup> Schama S., *Embarrassment* 160, 174–177.

lacked the beautiful, varied, and historical colleges of Cambridge and Oxford, where from 1623 to 1629 Browne had resided in Pembroke College across from the impressive buildings of Christ Church.<sup>6</sup> While English visitors to Leiden's university admired the method and efficacy of instruction as well as the university's anatomy theatre, botanical garden, and collections of curiosities, they also feared that youngish students would suffer from the lack of discipline that colleges were meant to provide *in loco parentis*. Leiden, that is, was far better suited for the mature student, one prepared to settle down and begin his useful, professional life.<sup>7</sup>

Browne's direct references to the Dutch or to Leiden in his later writings were few, but reflect a somewhat ambivalent concession to their practicality. In *Religio Medici*, Browne reduced the 'pety Province of Holland' to a capacity to accomplish much with little that he attributed at once 'to the mercy of God' behind their 'thriving *Genius*' and to their 'ingenuity and industry'.<sup>8</sup> Later, in letters to his son Edward, he remarked on how the Dutch 'make defences agaynst sea inundations' and also on the fact that they, 'though a drincking nation, yet managed their warre [more] carefully and advantageously then the English'.<sup>9</sup> Whether in fact Browne lived in Leiden for one month or several makes little difference in the role that the young university played in his education. If Padua (where Browne had recently studied before travelling to Leiden) offered a world in which medical knowledge and practice were implicated in exploratory and unorthodox thought and sophisticated masquerades of self-fashioning, Leiden offered medicine as a highly practical course of study in the context of a young Protestant nation with a strong need for physicians, lawyers, and preachers. The extraordinary collection of curiosities displayed in the anatomy theatre exhorted the medical student to confront life and death with gusto to be sure, but also with utmost practicality, a strong sense of duty, and economy. Anthony Grafton has remarked that Leiden University was 'an institution at once cosmopolitan and provincial, oriented toward

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<sup>6</sup> Browne entered Broadgates Hall in 1623; in 1624 it was incorporated into the new foundation of Pembroke College.

<sup>7</sup> Van Strien C.D., *British Travellers in Holland during the Stuart Period* (Leiden: 1993) 199.

<sup>8</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici and other works*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: 1964) 17.

<sup>9</sup> Browne T., *The works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) 4.31, 4.141.

research and dedicated to pedagogy, innovative and traditional'.<sup>10</sup> But it should also never be forgotten that the essential mission of the university was the production of professionals to support the welfare of an emerging Protestant nation. It served Browne in precisely this fashion – from the lectures that the faculty gave on practical medicine, to the design of the botanical garden and anatomy theatre, and including the focus of dissertations on a single disease of the kind we now know Browne to have authored.

### 1. *Practical Medicine*

More than anything else, the university in Leiden insisted on the practicalities – vocational, commercial, moral, spiritual, and national – of a medical education. In keeping with the University's founding mission, that 'intellectuals were expected to work for the benefit of the state' and for the sake of 'social utility and moral edification', the medical curriculum focused its attention on 'the training of practical abilities'.<sup>11</sup> As Harold Cook has shown, the Dutch natural historian's experiential and accurate knowledge of the materials of the entire world was inextricable from the commercial and colonia

discovery of the world – its geography, peoples, plants and animals, and astrological and alchemical associations; the accumulation of specimens of it, the cataloguing of its variety, and the detailing of its structure.<sup>12</sup>

For Browne, the scion of a London merchant, this intimacy between the desiderata of physicians or naturalists and the goals of 'the hard-headed merchant'<sup>13</sup> established a pattern of livelihood that he pursued for the rest of his life, one in which the responsible and assiduous fulfilment of a medical living coincided with a heightened curiosity for and attention to the materials of the world.

<sup>10</sup> Grafton A., "Civic Humanism and Scientific Scholarship at Leiden", in Bender T. (ed.), *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present* (Oxford: 1988) 59–78, here 63.

<sup>11</sup> Huisman F., "Medicine and Health Care in the Netherlands, 1500–1800", in Van Berkel K. – Van Helden A. – Palm L. (eds.), *A History of Science in the Netherlands* (Leiden: 1999) 239–278, here 241; and Beukers H., "Clinical Teaching in Leiden from Its Beginning until the End of the Eighteenth Century", in Beukers H. – Moll J. (eds.), *Clinical Teaching, Past and Present* (Amsterdam: 1989) 139–152, here 139.

<sup>12</sup> Cook H.J., *Matters of Exchange: Commerce, Medicine, and Science in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven, CT: 2007) 41, 81.

<sup>13</sup> Cook H.J., *Matters of Exchange* 81.

In December 1632, Johannes Walaeus (1604–1649) gave an oration (published in 1633) which epitomized the University's highly practical approach to medical instruction.<sup>14</sup> Warning against the kind of study that shows a false face of erudition, the kind that pursues only that knowledge which is remote from human understanding, Walaeus exhorted his auditors to attend to the easily understood sapience to be found at their very feet. According to his warning, scholars who neglected the immediate and readily mastered were vainly seeking an admirable reputation that depended on the ignorance of others; they cared nothing for the excellent utility of their knowledge and rejected the substantial food of useful knowledge for the mere seasoning of esotericism.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, Walaeus announced, he and the Leiden medical professoriate would offer solid knowledge rather than splendour and cleverness – in short, the art comprising the means to prevent disease and preserve health. Far from overlooking the concerns of religion and the republic, he argued, such preventative medicine served both far better than abstruse speculation ever could.

At the end of his oration, Walaeus announced that he planned to take this practical, preventative approach to medicine in his lessons over the course of the next academic year, with major emphasis on nutrition.<sup>16</sup> As early as November 1632, the Curators had given him permission to teach on Wednesdays and Saturdays; in August 1633, his status would convert to professor "extraordinarius". According to at least one contemporary, Walaeus was an incomparably effective lecturer.<sup>17</sup> Appropriately, Schoneveld makes the case that Browne's own strongly practical approach to medicine reflects Walaeus's signature teachings from the latter's first years in the university.<sup>18</sup> Browne's vocational concern for the bodies and souls of his patients was stimulated by and harmonized with the thrust of Walaeus's orientation. Yet *Religio Medici*'s intricate speculations on so many potentially perilous questions – the role of providence, the significance of monstrosity, the nature and activity of angels, the mysterious relations between body

<sup>14</sup> Walaeus J., *Iohannis Walaei Oratio inaugralis* (Leiden: 1633).

<sup>15</sup> Walaeus J., *Oratio* 7–8.

<sup>16</sup> Walaeus J., *Oratio* 30–31.

<sup>17</sup> Schouten J., *Johannes Walaeus* (Assen: 1972) 142.

<sup>18</sup> Schoneveld C.W., "Sir Thomas Browne and Leiden University in 1633", in Schoeck R.J. (ed.), *Sir Thomas Browne and the Republic of Letters. English Language Notes* 19 (1982) 335–359, here 349; the essay is reworked in Schoneveld C.W., *Sea-Changes: Studies in Three Centuries of Anglo-Dutch Cultural Transmission* (Amsterdam: 1996) 1–30.

and soul – also testify to Browne's dissatisfaction with a curriculum that reduced wisdom to *praxis*.

Leiden's faculty was neither stultifying nor innovative in the medical world of the seventeenth century. On the one hand were the city's reputation for intellectual liberty and its strength in a printing industry that served as the chief disseminator of the 'diverse cross currents of the turbulent intellectual life of the century': these things facilitated the university's openness to new ideas. On the other, caution, prudence, and traditionalism all meant that 'the new science would prove difficult to assimilate, for it challenged the knowledge, procedures and aspirations cultivated by centuries of academic learning'.<sup>19</sup> As will be clear from descriptions of the anatomy theatre and the botanical garden, Leiden's medical sites encouraged both a strong curiosity and a solemnity of purpose, but they also offered guidelines regarding how the two approaches to knowledge might be reconciled. As in theology, so too in medicine, the practical bent of scholarship at Leiden often translated what might otherwise have proved a penchant for openness into the far more prudent, if potentially censorious, agenda of careful, deliberate harmonization.

The man from whom Browne received his medical degree, Adolph Vorstius (1597–1663), was scrupulously dutiful in an often contentious age, vetting new ideas from the vantage of strong classical scholarship with what contemporaries considered moderation, integrity, and good judgement. In the 1620s and 1630s, he was responsible for botanical as well as medical instruction, adding an appendix of plants in the Leiden garden to the 1633 edition of Adrianus Spigelius's *Isagoges in rem herbariam libri duo*.<sup>20</sup> His other publications were devoted to the explication of Hippocrates, in one of which – a tiny pocket book – he stressed the Hippocratic tendency to pack an abundance of medical wisdom into small space. Indeed, Vorstius conceived his own translation of the Greek into Latin as simple, unaffected, and '*sine fuso*' ('without artificial embellishment').<sup>21</sup> As Schoneveld notes, Browne's conviction that the aphorisms of Hippocrates were enormously valuable to the physician would have been strengthened by his encounter with Vorstius.<sup>22</sup> Simi-

<sup>19</sup> Ruestow E.G., *Physics* 10.

<sup>20</sup> Spigelius A., *Isagoges in rem herbariam libri duo* (Leiden: 1633); this was the third edition. The first had been published in Padua in 1606.

<sup>21</sup> Hippocrates, *Aphorismi Hippocratis*, ed. A. Vorstius (Leiden: 1628) \*2<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Schoneveld C.W., *Sea-Changes* 353.

larly, with Browne's doctoral thesis on smallpox, the candidate was required to distill the best available wisdom concerning a particular disease into the narrow room of a small pamphlet.

## 2. *Browne's Dissertation*

Leiden's greatest value for Browne derived from the fact that the university awarded him an M.D. in 1633. An image of a doctoral procession emerging from the Academy Building in the middle of the seventeenth century survives: the graduate is surrounded by professors and beadle's while nearby alongside the canal, a woman holds a baby, women and men pause to chat, a child holds a hoop, and two dogs scrounge on a summer's day.<sup>23</sup> To reach this celebration, the doctoral candidate passed through the three trials preliminary to his promotion: a secret (private) exam covering the fundamentals of the whole of medicine and especially the methods of curing, which (if passed) was followed on the next day at 5.00 p.m. by a defence of two selected Hippocratic aphorisms against objections posed by members of the faculty. After these two stages, the candidate publicly presented his thesis (in which he usually explained the cure of a disease according to the methods of Galen and Hippocrates), and answered objections to his argument, all in Latin.<sup>24</sup> In general, the university community in attendance wore full regalia and the candidate also wore a gown, according to the 1631 statutes a robe of black damask; after delivering his thesis, the new doctor received a book, a gold ring for scholarly excellence, and a velvet cap. He gave a short oration, then joined a procession to a church or to some other "honest" house for a worship service, after which there was a feast. According to the curators of the University, the doctoral recipient had to be at least twenty-eight years old; Browne had just recently turned twenty-nine.<sup>25</sup>

Scholars unwilling to accept Guy Patin's (1601–1672) opinion that Browne had written his dissertation on syphilis have sometimes

<sup>23</sup> For this image, see *Athenae Batavae: De Leidse Universiteit, 1575–1975* (Leiden: 1975) 32.

<sup>24</sup> Otterspeer W., *Groepsportret met Dame I: Het blowerk van de vrijheid de Leidse universiteit 1575–1672* (Amsterdam: 2000) 240–241; Kroon J.E., *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van het Geneeskundig Onderwijs aan de Leidsche Universiteit 1575–1625* (Leiden: 1911) 15–16.

<sup>25</sup> Otterspeer, *Groepsportret* 240–242.

offered alternatives of their own, as did Huntley in speculating that ‘[i]f Browne’s thesis still exists, a good place to look for it might be among works on generation’.<sup>26</sup> As a passage in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* clarifies, Huntley was on the right track, insofar as in the centuries leading up to the seventeenth, the dominant theory of its actual topic – the smallpox rather than the great – was the Arabian view that foetuses contracted the disease from the menstrual blood of their mothers.<sup>27</sup>

Extant Leiden medical theses offer a good sense of what the typical dissertation involved. One Joannes Le Clerc published his Leiden dissertation or “disputatio medica inauguralis” on melancholy in 1633. Divided into two sections, one for theses and the other for corollaries, the paper includes among its seventeen theses a standard set of concerns: the different names for and types of the disease; its symptoms and causes; its humoral or complexional varieties; diagnostic signs; prognosis; indications (the semiotics of the cure); and curative methods and materials. Its chief authorities – Galen, Aretus, Aristotle, Averroës, and Hippocrates – are not at all surprising.<sup>28</sup>

A collection of twenty-six Leiden medical theses from 1639–1640 corroborates that Browne’s focus on smallpox was typical of contemporary Leiden dissertations in its concentration on a particular disease, with apoplexy, epilepsy, pleurisy, syphilis, heart palpitations, and arthritis included in the series of topics.<sup>29</sup> In this group, Franciscus Nansius’s thesis on smallpox adhered closely to the conventions found in Le Clerc’s 1633 dissertation, beginning however with a declaration of the ubiquity of smallpox which follows (without citing) a formulation in the work of Montpellier’s Lazare Rivière (Lazarus Riverius, 1589–1644),

<sup>26</sup> Huntley F.L., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1962) 68.

<sup>27</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. R. Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford: 1981) 1.327. For the discovery of Browne’s topic, see Barbour R., “The Topic of Sir Thomas Browne’s Dissertation”, *Notes & Queries* 54 (2007) 38–39.

<sup>28</sup> Le Clerc J., *Disputatio medica inauguralis, De melancholia* (Leiden: 1633). The point about the restraints of these dissertations should not be exaggerated. It is not the case that the Leiden medical program actively or sternly suppressed the bold and the new. The sense purveyed by the handful of writings published by the medical faculty, by the charge of the university itself, and by the evidence of student thought and culture, is that the overall stress of the Leiden experience was on vocational practicality. If new ideas and practices might be worked out and folded into the curriculum without great expense or disruption, then the evidence suggests that Leiden permitted its medical teaching to evolve.

<sup>29</sup> The collection is found in St. John’s College, Oxford, where it is shelved as HB.415.6.4.5.

namely, that amongst thousands of men and women, scarcely one will have escaped the disease. Indeed, Nansius adhered exceedingly closely to two sources of which Browne himself was very fond, the work of Rivière and the standard, synthesizing textbook of Daniel Sennert (1572–1637).

With smallpox, the final consideration was at once highly important and admittedly cosmetic: the prevention of scarring. One persistent question concerned whether a gold or a silver probe should be deployed for lancing the pustules, but the conciseness of a dissertation prevented Nansius from saying much about a horror – the ravages left by the pox – that was everywhere to be found not just in everyday experience but in poetic interpretations of the moral and spiritual logic of disease.<sup>30</sup> As one contemporary commentator claimed, ‘I hardly knowe that there is any disease whereof weomen are more carefull then of the comlines of their faces that they be disfigured or blemished wth the hollow pitts or markes of the Small pox’.<sup>31</sup>

The theory of humours at the basis of Galenic medicine was ill equipped to deal with the possibility of new diseases, and smallpox accentuated this problem by virtue of its apparent universality. Although the Arabic theories of Rhazes (?865–?925) and Avicenna (980–1037) differed in their explanations, they agreed in crediting the inevitability of the smallpox. For Rhazes, the affliction – if it can be called that – arises rather benignly from the maturation of the child’s blood, like the fermentation of wine; for Avicenna, every foetus derives impurity from its mother’s blood. The two theories were commonly conflated in the seventeenth century, then framed – often uncomfortably – within the ancient medical theories of the humours.

If many authors sought to establish knowledge of smallpox among the ancients, most conceded that the ancients had not discussed the disease extensively and that their distinction between smallpox and measles had proved inadequate to prevent ongoing disagreement among authorities about just this matter. The struggle over the antiquity and universality of smallpox increased in the first quarter of the seventeenth century

<sup>30</sup> See for instance Strode W., “On Sir Thomas Savill Dying of the Small Pox” in *The Poetical Works of William Strode*, ed. B. Dobell (London: 1907) 86–87. Browne would have known about Richard Corbett’s loss of his wife to smallpox in 1628; see also Corbett’s poem “An Elegie Upon the Death of the Lady Haddington who dyed of the small Pox” in *The Poems of Richard Corbett*, eds. J.A.W. Bennett – H.R. Trevor-Roper (Oxford: 1955) 59–62.

<sup>31</sup> Cambridge University Library MS Dd-2-41, f. 63.

with the growing suspicion that the highly virulent smallpox experienced by early modern patients might in fact prove radically different from a relatively benign medieval version.<sup>32</sup> As Browne himself would later express in *Letter to a Friend*, early modern medical authorities were faced with the prospect that even if the smallpox was not entirely new, at the very least its contemporary strain was increasingly deadly.<sup>33</sup> Not surprisingly, medical notebooks from the period are sometimes unsure about how to categorize the smallpox: as a skin disease, a paediatric matter, a fever, a contagious, acute, or ‘common disease’, for instance.<sup>34</sup> Walaeus opted for the febrile explanation.<sup>35</sup>

Although Nansius spent a minimum of effort and space on authorities, whether ancient, medieval or modern, this is no guarantee that Browne’s lost dissertation was similarly sparing in its references. Browne later proved scrupulously up-to-date in his assessment of authorities on smallpox, not least because he understood that the disease represented new challenges. In writing to his son Edward, Browne singled out two authorities on skin diseases whose works appeared in the years just before his medical training: Girolamo Mercuriale (Mercurialis, 1530–1606) and Samuel Hafenreffer (1587–1660). In *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, he outlines the medical orthodoxy according to which:

in the purest and most faire conceptions, learned men derive the cause of Pox and Meazels, from the principles of that nature, that is, the menstrual impurities in the mothers bloud, and virulent tinctures contracted by the Infant, in the nutriment of the wombe.<sup>36</sup>

Yet his familiarity with Mercuriale’s work on children’s diseases also meant that he knew that this orthodox aetiology had been contested.

Mercuriale criticized older accounts of smallpox on numerous grounds in his study of the diseases of children, *De morbis puerorum tractatus locupletissimi*.<sup>37</sup> Extending his argument that smallpox, like the great pox or syphilis, was a relatively new disease into an argument

<sup>32</sup> See Carmichael A.G. – Silverstein A.M., “Smallpox in Europe before the Seventeenth Century: Virulent Killer or Benign Disease?”, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 42 (1987) 147–168, here 160.

<sup>33</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.107.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance Cambridge University Library MSS Dd.2.41, Dd.2.34, Dd.3.21, and Dd.3.10.

<sup>35</sup> Walaeus J., *Medica omnia* (London: 1660) 126–127.

<sup>36</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 327.

<sup>37</sup> On Mercuriale, see Mercuriale G., *Sixteenth Century Physician and His Methods: Mercurialis on Diseases of the Skin*, trans. and ed. R.L. Sutton (Kansas City, MO: 1986).

for causation, he turned to the one medieval authority, Avenzoar (d. 1162), who in his estimation had managed to break free of the grip held by Avicenna and Rhazes. The critical cause was to be found in the environment, in vitiated air, though he is not entirely clear whether this source is, as in Jean Fernel (1497–1558), a celestial one or some type of mundane miasma.<sup>38</sup> All the same, Mercuriale clearly criticized Fernel for focusing exclusively on the air, for this cause must unite with heredity, an aptitude that disposes certain children to the diseases of their family. This explanation was not the same as menstrual blood, which Mercuriale rejected, but it kept smallpox in the category of diseases having to do with generation.<sup>39</sup>

Whereas Sennert calmly guided the medical student toward the most viable means of treating smallpox, Mercuriale accentuated the questions raised by the new, or newly virulent, disease: was it mainly a disease for children? Was its virulence among adults a new twist in its history? Why was it nearly impossible to evade? Could it be attributed to contagion, as by Girolamo Fracastoro (1478–1553)?<sup>40</sup> Was it to be classed with fevers or with skin diseases, as Giovanni Minadói (1545–1618) argued in *De variolis et morbillis liber unicus*, and as Hafenreffer would do in his *Pandocheion* of 1630?<sup>41</sup> Was the smallpox a humoral condition like all the other diseases or, according to new theories of disease, an ontological entity? Was skin disease the provenance of the surgeon or the physician, or both? Might the disease be located in ancient history, perhaps in the Athenian plague described by Thucydides? Was it a disease that developed among certain peoples in specific circumstances at particular times, owing as much to custom as to nature? Why did some people get it more than once? Did a cure involve heating further what nature was already boiling, and how might traditional methods of bleeding and purging be challenged by the habits of smallpox? Why did it seem to pick on the royalty and aristocracy? Was it a “Northern” disease? Why were there both benign and lethal versions of the same disease?

<sup>38</sup> See Fernel J., *On the Hidden Causes of Things*, trans. and ed. J.M. Forrester, intro. and notes by J. Henry and J.M. Forrester (Leiden: 2005) 586–595 on celestial cause.

<sup>39</sup> Mercuriale G., *De morbis puerorum* (Venice: 1588) 8<sup>v</sup>–9<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> Fracastoro G., *Contagion, Contagious Diseases and Their Treatment*, ed. and trans. W.C. Wright (New York: 1930) 72–75.

<sup>41</sup> Minadói G., *De variolis et morbillis liber unicus* (Padua: 1603); and Hafenreffer S., *Pandocheion aiolodermum* (Tübingen: 1630); on Hafenreffer, see Lyncker P., “Samuel Hafenreffer (1587–1660): Leben, Werk, seine Bedeutung für die Dermatologie”, unpublished PhD dissertation (Eberhard-Karls-Universität, Tübingen: 1966).

Why was smallpox so savage in its pocking or blemishing of humanity's God-given beauty? Was this ironically nature's way of using the less noble periphery to save the nobler parts of the body, or was it a token of corruption at the human core?<sup>42</sup>

Browne's topic would have been framed by the highly practical tendencies of the Leiden medical program. Nonetheless, an interest in skin and in the diseases that afflict it appears elsewhere in his writings: in his memory of the "morgellons" among the children in southern France; in his anatomical observations; in letters on medical and anatomical subjects; and in his fearful, prayerful account of a virulent strain of smallpox ravaging Norwich in the final year of his life.<sup>43</sup> Smallpox was especially troubling in its monstrous scarring of the human hieroglyph whose face, Browne believed, ought to manifest the divine Creator, not the pocked legacy of corrupt generation. What is more, its virulent strain appeared, as we have seen, to have arisen suddenly and shockingly in the very years at Oxford during which Browne was finishing his studies there. In the years just before and after Browne's thesis, England suffered from two in a series of smallpox epidemics, with 531 perishing in 1632, and 1354 in 1634. From the New World, reports in 1634 indicated in graphic detail that smallpox was a horrible factor in the colonies, though one that could be interpreted as favouring the divine protection of the colonists.<sup>44</sup> Despite those few English medical writers who persisted in deeming smallpox among the mild diseases, most were intensely aware of the fact that, as of the 1620s, it was replacing plague as the most hideous and lethal of all diseases.<sup>45</sup> Outside of England,

<sup>42</sup> Histories of smallpox include Hopkins D.R., *Princes and Peasants: Smallpox in History* (Chicago: 1983); Hopkins D.R., *The Greatest Killer: Smallpox in History* (Chicago: 2002), with a new introduction; Smith J.R., *The Speckled Monster: Smallpox in England, 1670–1970, with particular reference to Essex* (Chelmsford: 1987); Glynn I. – Glynn J., *The Life and Death of Smallpox* (London: 2004); Dixon C.W., *Smallpox* (London: 1962); Miller G., *The Adoption of Inoculation for Smallpox in England and France* (Philadelphia: 1957); Moore J., *The History of the Small Pox* (London: 1815); Edwards E.J., *A Concise History of Small-pox and Vaccination in Europe* (London: 1902); and Creighton C., *A History of Epidemics in Britain*, 2nd ed., 2 vols (London: 1965) 2.434–459.

<sup>43</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.106, 3.338–340, 4.69–74, 4.200, 4.202, 4.218, 4.241–242.

<sup>44</sup> Aberth J., *The First Horseman: Disease in Human History* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: 2007) 67.

<sup>45</sup> See Whitaker T., *An Elenchus of opinions concerning the cure of the small pox* (London: 1661); [Anon.], *Hactenus inaudita* (London: 1663); Westwood A., *De variolis & morbillis* (London: 1656); Nedham M., *Medela medicinae* (London: 1665) 52–55; for lingering views on mildness, see the discussion of Walter Harris in Sloan A.W., *English Medicine in the Seventeenth Century* (Durham: 1996) 159.

on the Continent where Browne was travelling, a fear of smallpox was just as powerful: indeed, in 1635 a French physician maintained that ‘smallpox was caused by the fear of smallpox’.<sup>46</sup>

Browne’s contemporaries were shocked by the brutality of smallpox on face and skin. In Browne’s Oxford, leading wits such as Richard Corbett (1582–1635) and William Strode (1600–1645) grappled with the deformity that the disease wrought. In 1633, Oxford poets found a special reason to respond in verses against smallpox: Charles I (1600–1649) had recently recovered from it. To this collection, *Musarum Oxoniensium pro rege suo soteria*, the head of Browne’s former college and Regius Professor of Medicine, Thomas Clayton (1575–1647), contributed a poem in which he acknowledged the disease’s power over that vast majority of human beings who lacked the king’s strong temperament and healthy mind.<sup>47</sup> As Raymond Anselment has argued, smallpox boasted an extraordinary relationship to seventeenth-century English poetry: it was among the only diseases that provoked its own tradition of poetic treatments, and its illogic, irony, and hideousness forced the wit of poets into incongruous conceits or strange bouts of humour. In a sentiment that anticipates Browne’s shame over the hideousness of the dying in *Religio Medici*, one of the 1633 Oxford poets joked that the king’s recovery would save the Queen and other courtly ladies from a fright.<sup>48</sup>

From this considerable body of poetry, a double motivation for Browne’s focus on smallpox becomes clearer. For one thing, the disease shocked contemporaries with its unprecedented virulence, prompting one commentator to recall that:

Mankind for a long time thought there was little Danger in the Small-Pox. They [the pox] were grown as it were familiar with them, by being accustomed to see the Recovery of most Children who had them [...] 'Twas with some Amazement they beheld their fatal Effects upon Persons more advanc'd in Years.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> The physician was Marc Duncan: see Shurkin J.N., *The Invisible Fire: The Story of Mankind's Victory Over the Ancient Scourge of Smallpox* (New York: 1979) 60.

<sup>47</sup> [Various], *Musarum Oxoniensium pro rege suo soteria* (Oxford: 1633), ¶¶1v.

<sup>48</sup> See Anselment R., “Smallpox in Seventeenth-Century English Literature: Reality and the Metamorphosis of Wit”, *Medical History* 33 (1989) 72–95.

<sup>49</sup> Helvetius J.C., *An Essay on the Animal Oeconomy. Together with Observations upon the Small Pox* (1723), quoted in Brunton D., “Pox Britannica: Smallpox Inoculation in Britain, 1721–1830”, unpublished PhD dissertation (University of Philadelphia: 1990) 9.

Throughout the opening decades of Browne's life, commentators agreed with John Chamberlain's (1553–1628) assessment in 1619 of how strangely 'this disease should now adayes take such hold of persons that for yeares and other respects thought themselves privileged longe since from the boyling and furie of maladies that follow younge bloud'.<sup>50</sup> For another thing, its ability to render hideous the most beautiful, youthful face wreaked havoc on a fanciful hieroglyphic thinker such as Browne for whom the visible was understood as a manifestation, if an 'equivocal' or imperfect one, of the invisible world of proportion, order, and beauty. Like any new disease, the smallpox confronted the physician with his helplessness and ignorance. But more than any other in the seventeenth century, smallpox 'seized the poetic imagination' with a penchant for 'nightmarish suffering', causing 'physical and psychological scars common to rich and poor alike', and 'the shared predicament of contemporaries caught between the desire to recoil from the ravages of smallpox and the need to accept the mounting crisis'. These dilemmas produced the kind of 'strained, often questionable wit' with which Browne himself often responded to monstrosity's mockery of the hieroglyphs of providence.<sup>51</sup> The problem of justifying providence was also acutely felt in the smallpox poems by virtue of the fact that they were 'distinctly preoccupied with the causes of suffering, misery, and death' as well as with the gruesome manifestations of these causes.<sup>52</sup> If the smallpox seemed at times to reflect 'an unjust, unknowable, and most "hard-hearted Fate"', it also marred the body so savagely that, as one poet worried, 'the *Soul* would hardly own | the *Body* at the *Resurrection*'.<sup>53</sup> As much as one might turn to dualism as a way of coping with the hideous body, the wit produced by smallpox was more apt to reinforce the 'inextricable relationship between appearance and identity'.<sup>54</sup> This question of whether visage was wrapped up with identity haunted Browne throughout his adult life: in *Religio Medici*'s digression on physiognomy and the extensive notes that he took on the anatomy of skin, the discussion of pigmentation in *Pseudodoxia*, notebook reminders to himself about how to respond to physically beautiful people, and

<sup>50</sup> Chamberlain's letter quoted in Anselment R., "Smallpox" 77.

<sup>51</sup> Anselment R., "Smallpox" 73–74.

<sup>52</sup> Anselment R., "Smallpox" 87.

<sup>53</sup> Anselment R., "Smallpox" 88.

<sup>54</sup> Anselment R., "Smallpox" 90.

his meditations on the hieroglyphics of skin in *The Garden of Cyrus*.<sup>55</sup> As the smallpox poetry shows, the disease complicated in ‘ironic, albeit grotesque’ ways the power of wit to metamorphose the graphic realities of disease into spiritual, moral, and social assets.<sup>56</sup>

Over the final fifty years of his life, Browne continued to worry about smallpox, as did his English contemporaries. Having generalized in *Religio Medici* that foetuses are ‘subject to [...] the malice of diseases in that other world, the truest Microcosme, the wombe of our mother’, he was more specific in *Pseudodoxia* on the causes of smallpox.<sup>57</sup> In *Letter to a Friend*, he observed that like rickets and the king’s evil, smallpox ‘grows more pernicious than the Great’. He left queries about ‘whether anyone suffers from smallpox and pestilence simultaneously’ (*An quis variolis et peste simul laborat*). In *Museum Clausum*’s desire for the survival of “A Commentary of Galen upon the Plague of Athens described by Thucydides”, he may have been longing for ancient insight into the new menace; but he was certainly anxious about smallpox in letters to his children on the devastating epidemic in Norwich from autumn 1681 through early 1682, a bout so intense and pervasive that Browne left it ‘to Gods mercy when he pleaseth to abate or Cease it, for the last run of the small Pox lasted much longer then this has yet dun’.<sup>58</sup> Browne’s experiences in Leiden reinforced the practical demands of preserving and recovering health, but they also pointed the way toward patience in the face of human vanity and fragility.

### 3. Botanical Garden and Anatomy Theatre

The prominence of the *hortus botanicus* and the anatomy theatre for medical education at the young Protestant university was obviously indebted to – and established clear continuity with – the medical curriculum at Padua; so too was the clinical program instituted at Leiden in 1636. But the garden and the anatomy theatre also exemplified habits of study, collection, and moralization that corroborated the University’s practical mission in a world of adversity. Especially in the simultaneously

<sup>55</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 56–58, 153; *Pseudodoxia* ed. R. Robbins, 1.507–530; *Works* ed. Keynes, 3.326.

<sup>56</sup> For wit and metamorphosis, see Anselment R., “Smallpox” 94.

<sup>57</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 38; *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 327.

<sup>58</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.107; 3.252; 3.112; 4.200, 4.202, 4.218.

allegorical and practical anatomy theatre of Leiden, medical training concentrated one's intellectual, spiritual, and physical faculties on the practical disciplining of vigorous curiosity in the ever-present face of laxity, vanity, and strife.

The design and ornamentation of the *hortus* and its gallery aimed to delight the visitor with its neat symmetries, classical porticoes, and phenomenal variety. But early commentators – and scholars ever since – have remarked on its simplicity in comparison to the elaborately hieroglyphic design of Padua or the mazy adventurous sprawl of Montpellier, where Browne had begun his continental training. By contrast, the Leiden garden embodied a geometry whose symbolic value was tidy and disciplined, and whose minor irregularities (with sixteen rectangular beds in three of the quadrants, and twelve in the fourth; with eighteen portions or *pulvilli*<sup>59</sup> in the beds of two quadrants, twenty-six in the third, and thirty-two in the fourth) served the morphological precision that was important to its construction from the beginning.<sup>60</sup> The designers of the garden wanted to maximize the botanical knowledge of the observer who would encounter plants from the Middle East and America alike. With the College of Theology bordering the garden and the garden's own simple geometry, the Leiden botanical experience was supposed to evoke a moral and providential framework for the study of nature.<sup>61</sup> But neither the moral-cum-theological framework nor the delight that one might take in the beds or in the collections of the ambulatory was supposed to work at cross-purposes with the strongly, essentially practical aims of the university or indeed of the United Provinces. As Florence Hopper stresses, the elegance of the garden was a factor of its clear, proportionate, and 'rational plan'.<sup>62</sup> Theology, morality, natural studies, and pleasure: praxis as against speculative vagaries and mazes held them all together for the Leiden medical student, who joined the city's public in the garden's cultivation of civic virtue.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>59</sup> "Pulvilli" are the separate plantings of different specimens in a rectangular bed: so not only was the number of beds in a quadrant different, but those rectangles differed in the number of specimens planted therein.

<sup>60</sup> Tjon Sie Fat L., "Clusius' garden: a reconstruction" in Tjon Sie Fat L. – De Jong E. (eds.), *The Authentic Garden: A Symposium on Gardens* (Leiden: 1991) 3–12, here 7.

<sup>61</sup> Hopper F., "Clusius' World: The Meeting of Science and Art" in Tjon Sie Fat L. – De Jong E. (eds.), *The Authentic Garden* 13–36, here 15.

<sup>62</sup> Hopper F., "Clusius' World" 18.

<sup>63</sup> De Jong E., "Nature and Art: The Leiden *Hortus* as 'Musaeum'", in Tjon Sie Fat L. – De Jong E. (eds.), *The Authentic Garden* 37–60, here 47.

Although it had been founded in 1577, the Leiden *hortus botanicus* was redesigned in the 1590s through the leadership of Professor Pieter Pauw (Petrus Pavius, 1564–1617) and the well-known botanist Carolus Clusius (Charles de l’Écluse, 1526–1609), and through the work of a previous candidate for directorship of the garden, Dirck Cluyt (Theodorus Clutius, c. 1546–1598). The upshot of the reworking was to stress the garden’s practicality in the study of botany as comprehensively as possible, with its four sections devoted to ‘the four continents (Europe, Asia, Africa, and America)’.<sup>64</sup> To facilitate study, the rectangular garden’s four quadrangles were approached

by means of two intersecting paths. Each quadrangle was divided into halves, which halves consisted of a number of beds. The beds were divided into small parcels. Usually a parcel was allotted to one species; sometimes the same species occurs on different plots.<sup>65</sup>

As Cook summarizes the point, Pauw’s recommendation that the beds be narrowed deviated ‘from Clusius’s sense of proper proportion’ but rendered ‘them easier to view by the students’.<sup>66</sup> The Hippocratic reminder that “vita brevis, ars longa” (life is short but art long) was wholly in keeping with the moral framework of these educational spaces, in which a constant awareness of human fragility was integrated with urgency in discovering the utility built wondrously and pervasively into God’s creation.

The Leiden *hortus* resembled the university’s anatomy theatre in more than just its variegated collection of curiosities. Both spaces included a museum comprising an astonishing range of things, far more than just the ‘charts and maps [...] strange animals and plants’ to which Orlers referred in 1614.<sup>67</sup> In each, the visitor encountered natural, ethnographic, artificial, and textual material of that extraordinary variety found in contemporary cabinets of curiosity. In his printed works (for instance, *The Garden of Cyrus* and *Urne-Buriall* (both 1658) and the *Miscellany Tracts* (1683)), in naturalist and anatomical notes that he kept, and in the conversion of his house into a cabinet of curiosities, Browne

<sup>64</sup> Findlen P., “Sites of Anatomy, Botany, and Natural History” in Park K. – Daston L. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Science. Volume 3: Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2006) 272–289, here 283.

<sup>65</sup> Veendorp H. and Baas Becking L.G.M., *Hortus Academicus Lvgdvno-Batavus 1587–1937* (Harlem: 1938) 36.

<sup>66</sup> Cook H.J., *Matters of Exchange* 119–120.

<sup>67</sup> De Jong E., “Nature and Art” 40–46.

purveyed throughout the rest of his life the sway that Leiden's combination of anatomy and botany, of curiosity and morality, held over his imagination. In the garden's collection alone, one would find:

a wonderful mixture of hanging and standing stuffed and dried animals from land, sea, and air, whole or in parts, of boxes with minerals, shells, nuts, herbs and eggs [...] Maps and charts [...] books to consult for students [...] simplicia or drugs [...] crocodiles, small and large, tortoise shells, Indian bats, a swordfish, bamboo-stalks, eggs, [...] penguins, a foot of a casuari [*sc. cassowary*], different fruits, plants and fishes from the East-Indies, corals, shells, a waterbird from Norway, teeth of a hippopotamus, parts of the whale and the cachalot, hoofs and shin-bones of the elk [...] Indian exotics from the West-Indies as a string of teeth, a cast-net, a skirt, an idol, bows and arrows and a hammock [...] a garment of a pigmee, paper with Chinese characters and depictions of plants and clothings from Russia and Japan.<sup>68</sup>

Inasmuch as Professor Pauw had overseen the construction of the anatomy theatre across the canal from the *hortus*, it is not surprising that it preceded the garden in featuring an impressive collection of curiosities, a tendency that Pauw's successor, Otto Heurnius (1577–1652), continued after Pauw's death in 1617. Indeed, the garden and the theatre shared their collections over the years.<sup>69</sup> With the help of David le Leu de Wilhem (1588–1658), Heurnius extended the ethnographic scope of the collection to Egypt, and he assiduously pursued research that would establish links between 'ethnographics, the antiquities, the flora and fauna' and the classical past – all this in an effort to make the anatomy theatre a 'centre where as many as possible building blocks necessary for knowledge of people and the world were concentrated' and in which spectators could 'contemplate on the relation between God, His creation and the place of man within this'.<sup>70</sup> The theatre was, moreover, in the eastern section of a former chapel, its eastern boundary curved as a reminder to those so inclined in their devotions that this space had been considered by the lay sisterhood who worshipped there the most sacred area in their world.

As Harold Cook has stressed, the emblematic messages developed by Heurnius in the wake of Pauw's original scheme were twofold:

<sup>68</sup> De Jong E., "Nature and Art" 44.

<sup>69</sup> De Jong E., "Nature and Art" 46.

<sup>70</sup> Huisman T., *A Theatre for anatomy: The Leiden theatrum anatomicum, 1594–1821* (Leiden: n.d.) 13. See also Barge J.A.J., *De Oudste Inventaris der Oudste Academische Anatomie in Nederland* (Leiden: 1934).

‘all humans are mortal, and the glory of God could be seen in the extraordinarily complex handiwork of his creation’.<sup>71</sup> This combination of dark and light memorials was aimed at creating urgency as well as discipline in exerting oneself in the pursuit of a learned vocation. What this meant was that given the combination of life’s brevity and the divinely created and ‘wonderful collaboration of organs and faculties’ in the human fabric, no moment, resource, or effort should be wasted in the fulfilment or exertion of vocation.<sup>72</sup>

With many engravings and paintings of a morally and spiritually disciplinary nature, and the former chapel of the Beguines (the Faliebagijnekerk, ‘a small high gothic chapel’)<sup>73</sup> in which the theatre was housed, the experience of anatomy in Leiden left no doubt that spectators were to learn to anatomize their own sins as surely as they were to learn the physiology of the bodies that they might cure. Most clearly, the spiritual and physical goals were united in the skeletons that combined homiletic and medical roles. On the one hand, they festooned the theatre’s frame with moral emblems of human vanity, not least in the skeletal tableau of Adam and Eve at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. On the banners held by the skeletons, one read that “death is the end of all things”, that we are merely “dust and shadows”, that life is short, man a bubble, that death should be remembered, and that self-knowledge should be our priority. On the other, medical, side of things, the bones of the many skeletons were equally useful, as was the amount of light – superior to that in Padua – that the theatre afforded for the business of anatomy.<sup>74</sup> In Cook’s words:

[t]he anatomized body not only provided a reminder of the consequences of Adam and Eve’s original sin but suggested that the only way of overcoming their deed was to walk away from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, allowing our bodies to add to the collective knowledge of the corporeal fabric with which God had clothed himself.<sup>75</sup>

In the winter months, from October to Easter, the skeletons were removed from the theatre proper in order to make room for the

<sup>71</sup> Cook H.J., *Matters of Exchange* 164.

<sup>72</sup> Cook H.J., *Matters of Exchange* 168.

<sup>73</sup> Van Strien C.D., *British Travellers* 5.

<sup>74</sup> Lunsingh Scheurleer T.H., “Un amphithéâtre d’anatomie moralisée” in Lunsingh Scheurleer T.H. – Posthumus Meyjes G.H.M. (eds.), *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century: An Exchange of Learning* (Leiden: 1975) 217–277.

<sup>75</sup> Cook H.J., *Matters of Exchange* 164–166.

anatomy itself; they were stored in the main Academy Building – some were used in medical lectures given on Thursday and Friday of each week<sup>76</sup> – until summer came around and the anatomy theatre returned to its function as a museum. Nonetheless, even in winter, spectators in the theatre confronted an artistic and ethnographic collection in which the lessons of fragility and vanity were writ large. Recent scholarship has identified with precision the iconographic moral lessons to which visitors in the anatomy theatre had access. Among the engravings, visitors encountered: the three Fates spinning and cutting the thread of life; a child making bubbles next to a flower and a smoking vessel, commonplace emblems of fragility and vanity; a powerful king side by side with a peasant, then both reduced to skeletal remains in death. Visitors read quotations from Seneca, Statius, and the Bible, stressing the fragility and precariousness of life, the omnipresence of death, and the complete control that providence possesses over both life and death in human affairs. As Scheurleer explains, the lesson to be garnered from the theatre underscored redemption as well as demise: the images collected by Heurnius included the childhood of Christ (the circumcision and the visit of the Magi), for instance, as well as one of Christ on the Mount of Olives and another (based on Michelangelo's depiction in the Sistine Chapel) of Christ's apotheosis on Judgment Day, while the theatre itself included in its apse the words of a prayer to the Saviour. There were, moreover, engraved celebrations of providential national redemption, with pictures of Prince Maurice and Frederick Henry, as well as an engraving of the Battle of Nieuport that, by hanging next to an image of the Red Sea passage, evoked parallels between the Israelites and the Dutch, between pharaoh and Phillip II.<sup>77</sup>

God's power was illustrated in pictures of two divine miracles, one of a herring inscribed with mysterious signs, the other of young Eva Vliegen from Meurs in Germany, a girl who was supposed to have lived for many years without food or drink. According to the text on this portrait, those who doubted and scoffed at Eva's miracle were trivial infidels who themselves should not be taken seriously. Moral discipline was urged by the theatre's depiction of eight virtuous Roman heroes, including Horatius Cocles, Marcus Curtius, Mucius Scaevola, among others, all suggestive of the lesson that virtue alone resists mortality in

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<sup>76</sup> Barge J.A.J., *De Oudste Inventaris* 39.

<sup>77</sup> Lunsingh Scheurleer T.H., "Amphithéâtre" 226–228, 230, 234–236.

this world. A very muscular Hercules, depicted with his club and surrounded by images of his labours, encapsulated the merits of reason, wisdom, constancy, honesty, and moral valour. Equally impressive were the engravings with cautionary tales against vice: the four falling personae known as the ‘somersaulters’ (Tantalus, Icarus, Phaeton, and Ixion, with warnings about arrogance, excess, presumption, and ambition); an allegory of the World, Flesh, and Devil in combat with the Christian soldier; images of the progressive decay of the ages from Golden to Bronze; and a juxtaposition of Esau with Jacob, the former a personification of fleshly pride. This sort of proverbial wisdom not only informed the very essence of Browne’s *Christian Morals*, but also contributed to his prose specific, compelling images such as the meditation on Icarus in the poem added to section 13 of the 1643 edition of *Religio Medici*.<sup>78</sup> Some of the images in the theatre pertained specifically to the obligations and concerns of Browne’s vocation as the physician and natural philosopher. In “The Alchemist”, a viewer encountered a satire on those people who neglect their children and sacrifice all their belongings for the sake of lucre. Conversely, there was a fourfold sequence that mocked the deterioration of patients’ estimation of a doctor from divinity to angel, to human, and finally devil with the progress from sickness to cure, recovery and finally the presentation of the doctor’s bill.

In the Leiden anatomy theatre then, visitors witnessed the medically useful anatomization of bodies and also enjoyed a museum of natural and ethnographic curiosities. But framing the physiology and the delight was what Scheurleer characterizes as a Christian ethos whose coherence was unmatched anywhere in Europe.<sup>79</sup> In this context, curiosity was subordinated to a utility at once spiritual and medical. As Vivian Nutton has argued, the emphasis on ‘the connection between anatomy and morality’ had deep roots in a Wittenberg tradition developed by Melanchthon, according to which:

Anatomy might serve as a meditation on death: it showed how fragile was man, how delicate his brain, how easily damaged his veins and nerves. It was thus a perpetual reminder of the transitory nature of this life and of the judgement of God to come.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 13–14.

<sup>79</sup> Lunsingh Scheurleer T.H., “Amphithéâtre” 269.

<sup>80</sup> Nutton V., “Wittenberg Anatomy”, in Grell O.P. – Cunningham A. (eds.), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London: 1993) 11–32, here 20–21.

One learned that disease was spiritual or moral as well as physical, and that medicine cooperated with scripture and divinity in the ‘religious regulations for the Christian community’. At the same time, this ethos also supported Galen’s message in *De usu partium* that the body is so carefully wrought by providence that its every feature is replete with purpose: ‘a knowledge of anatomy would reveal in man the “dwelling-place” of God, the home of the soul, and hence impart in [sic] the observer a desire to maintain this divine temple in as neat a condition as one would a local church’.<sup>81</sup>

In *Religio Medici*, Browne celebrated the body’s functional perfection as promoted by Galen’s *De usu partium*, and he testified to the experience of ‘raking into the bowels of the deceased, continual sight of Anatomies, Skeletons, or Cadaverous reliques’.<sup>82</sup> He emphasized, moreover, that such reading and experience had been instrumental in his appreciation for divine providence as well as his strong Christian resolution. At the crux of what Browne observed in Leiden was the commitment to vocation. In keeping with the University’s mission to support a new commonwealth in a time of greatest adversity and vulnerability, the anatomy theatre was designed to impress upon its doctors, dignitaries, students, and other visitors that they must leave the anatomy with a renewed commitment to virtue, discipline, and duty, and with a never-failing understanding that their lives (if not their virtuous actions) would prove as utterly vain as the skeletons who had rebuked them. As Schoneveld says, ‘[t]o stress the relation between religion and medicine was one of the purposes of the decoration of the anatomy theatre at Leiden’. It is not really surprising then that Leiden

showed the first Continental interest in Browne’s religion as a medicus: within two years of the first English edition [1642], a Latin translation [of *Religio Medici*] was published there.<sup>83</sup>

#### 4. *Peace, Conflict, and Religion after Dort*

The botanical garden and anatomy theatre offered uncontroversial lessons in the fragility of human life, in the responsibilities of vocation,

<sup>81</sup> Nutton V., “Wittenberg Anatomy” 21. Compare Mary-Ann Lund’s essay in this volume.

<sup>82</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 14, 37.

<sup>83</sup> Schoneveld C.W., *Sea-Changes* 354.

and in the need to limit curiosity within religious and moral boundaries. Yet theological controversies preoccupied both the city and university of Leiden. In the longer history of religious sectarianism and toleration in the Netherlands, 1633, the year in which Browne took his doctorate, was particularly fraught. A few years after he returned from the Continent, Browne would write in *Religio Medici* that he refused to subscribe to the extremes of religious dogma epitomized by the Council of Trent and the Synod of Dort.<sup>84</sup> In 1633, just over a decade after the triumph of Calvinism at Dort, the Netherlands into which Browne travelled was experiencing an intense struggle – military, cultural, and religious – to recover its sense of direction and purpose after the internecine conflicts leading to and emerging from that famous meeting.

By the time Browne reached Leiden in 1633, the city's position on religious toleration and conformity was at once clear and complicated. After the Synod of Dort, the Calvinist victors had purged the University of its Arminian leaders and scholars, and the town citizenry was strongly Counter-Remonstrant in emphasis, though the university magistracy remained beholden to no church in particular. It was a typical remark from a traveller to Leiden that 'every Sunday here there is open preaching in three Dutch, one French, one English, one Lutheran and about three Mennonite churches'.<sup>85</sup> By the 1630s, moreover, there was something of a thaw in the suppression of the Remonstrants, as well as a lessening or at least a destabilizing of the political corollaries of the debate, though it is also true that the regents of the States of Holland refused to let the exiled Grotius return in 1632. In 1633, religious controversy among the Dutch came to a new head in response to recent events in the longstanding war with Spain.

The war with Spain had first nationalized then powerfully consolidated Dutch religious identity, of course, but in 1633 the United Provinces found themselves at a major point of contention between those who desired ongoing war with a diminished Spanish power and those who sought détente. From the winter of 1632–1633 until December 1633, the month of Browne's graduation, negotiations for a peace with Spain were ongoing, with Frederick Henry (1584–1647; Stadholder 1625–1647) and the Arminian towns pushing for an end to

<sup>84</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin 5.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in Kooi C., *Liberty and Religion: Church and State in Leiden's Reformation* (Leiden: 2000) 162.

conflict. After all, Spain was increasingly preoccupied with France, and the United Provinces were simply no longer as vulnerable as they had been in earlier years. Nonetheless, by June, ‘the negotiations were on the verge of collapse’, and Frederick Henry came into conflict with the Arminian towns. During the autumn of 1633, the Dutch debate over what to do with the Spanish came to a climax, with political conflict between those Arminians subversive of the authority of the Stadholder and the Calvinists with whom he was once again aligned. His hesitations and fluctuations meant that by the end of 1633, Frederick Henry was not really in favour with either side. 1633 has been called ‘the great watershed in the stadholderate of Frederick Henry’, the year in which he changed sides, came to support war and Calvinism, contributed to the re-emergence of the Arminian political party, and undercut the basis of his own authority. As Israel summarizes, ‘[t]he year 1633 was thus one of the key turning-points of the Dutch Golden Age’.<sup>86</sup>

The Province of Holland was renowned among tourists for its tolerance of sectarian Protestants and Jews, but the theology faculty in Leiden – Johannes Polyander (1568–1646), Antonius Walaeus (1573–1639), Antonius Thysius (1603–1665), and (until 1632) Andreas Rivetus (1572–1651) – so strongly believed in religious unity or at least harmony in Dutch Reform that they tended to present a united front, rather than diversity, in their theological declarations. Making use of the different strengths that each possessed,<sup>87</sup> they ensured that their differences added up to a synthesis or “synopsis” – as in their 1625 *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, a handbook of fifty-two disputations with an aim toward stabilizing and consolidating Dutch orthodoxy. In this, they manifested what one scholar has called an ‘astonishing unity’.<sup>88</sup>

Thomas Browne’s likely English associates in Leiden suggest a similar situation in which divided groups – Scottish and English Reformed and Separatists – were torn between their strong commitment to a vision of religious truth and their resistance to the persecution that such

<sup>86</sup> Israel J., *The Dutch Republic 1477–1806: Its Rise, Greatness and Fall* (Oxford: 1995) 523–524.

<sup>87</sup> Walaeus was gifted in philosophy, Thysius in languages, especially Hebrew; Thysius and Rivetus had wider erudition in theology, and Walaeus and Polyander more solid. Thysius and Walaeus were more fervent while Rivetus was calmer and Polyander the calmest of all. See Bavinck H. (ed.), *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (Leiden: 1881).

<sup>88</sup> Van Rooden P.T., *Theology, Biblical Scholarship and Rabbinical Studies in the Seventeenth Century: Constantijn L’Empereur (1591–1648), Professor of Hebrew and Theology at Leiden* (Leiden: 1989) 54.

commitments can yield. In 1633, Hugh Goodyear (1588–1661) was the pastor of the English Reformed church, which worshipped in the Jerusalem Chapel, on the southwest side of the Cellebroeders Canal (now Keizerstraat), not far from the University Building.<sup>89</sup> Brereton recorded his impressions of a service there on 8 June 1634:

We stayed the Sabbath at Leyden [...] and heard Mr. Goodier (a worthy, honest man) in the English church, a little (yet neat) place, and not fully furnished with hearers. Hither also to this church we went in afternoon: came thither before two, yet sermon begun. After sermon, all of that congregation desired to stay: we departed.<sup>90</sup>

Having left the church, the group proceeded to observe the goings-on in the Pieterskerk, where Brereton remarked that the bread and wine were distributed among the men and women without ‘such decency and reverence as in England’.<sup>91</sup> According to Jeremy Bangs, Father Paulus van Velden, the Catholic priest known as “de Goede”, ‘continued to live in his house in the Jerusalem Almshouse and to wear vestments openly until his death in 1635’.<sup>92</sup> During the period of Browne’s stay in Leiden, a visitor might thus observe signs of ecumenical peace and toleration.

By 1633, not only Goodyear’s congregation but also the Dutch Reformed Church itself had absorbed many of the Separatists with whom Goodyear had always had good relations. But in a manner that anticipates Browne’s own ecumenism and independence, Goodyear’s relation to contemporary English and Dutch religious alternatives resisted neat classification: as Bangs explains, he ‘never fully supported congregationalism’, but he ‘clearly did not consider the office of bishops to be important’ either, ‘for he accepted ordination from a couple of friends in Leiden, who were without hierarchic importance in England or in Holland’. Yet ‘a low opinion of bishops evidently does not imply any high regard for synods’, for between 1622 and about 1635, when the English synod convened in the Netherlands, although ‘Goodyear

<sup>89</sup> Orlers J.H., *Beschrijvinge der Stadt Leyden*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: 1641) 143–144. Cf. Van Oerle I.H.A., *Leiden binnen en buiten de stadswallen* (Leiden: 1975) 202.

<sup>90</sup> Brereton W., *Travels in Holland* 45–46.

<sup>91</sup> Brereton W., *ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Correspondence with the author, 30 April 2004. I am indebted to Jeremy Bangs for his knowledge of the Jerusalem Chapel and of religious culture in Leiden’s history.

attended the first synod session, [...] he and his congregation did not participate further'.<sup>93</sup>

Browne had connections to the Separatists: the tobacconist Richard Monck, with whom Browne lodged, was affiliated with Separatists such as John Lee, who were clearly prepared to change their lives radically for the sake of their beliefs, but who often mitigated the starkness of those beliefs in an effort to get along with the other churches in Leiden.<sup>94</sup> Browne's encounter with a Separatist community was thus greatly facilitated by their flexible, generous relations with the university, with Calvinism, and with the Dutch and English Reformed churches into which they were folded. What Browne encountered in this religious community was a living version of the "Synopsis": the imperfect but deeply felt commitment to reconciling truth with peace within a workable community. This state of harmony between English Reformed and Separatist was not to be taken for granted; in Amsterdam, by contrast, the two communities contended with one another, sometimes virulently.<sup>95</sup>

If Goodyear was on predominantly good relations with the Separatists, cases of severe congregant dissatisfaction arose in the 1630s that threatened to drag the English Reformed church into scandal. As Sprunger has shown, Goodyear was a stern and persistent regulator of his congregants' faith and manners, never wanting 'to let the guilty escape to a more permissive brotherhood' and making sure that the 'scandalous' and 'obstinate' were subjected to 'a public censure'. One unintended effect of Goodyear's approach was that his church tended to be more isolated than he would have liked. The Laudian Stephen Goffe (1605–1681), who matriculated at the University in February 1633, joked that while Goodyear 'refuseth to be of the English Clasis', his application

<sup>93</sup> Bangs J.D. (ed.), *The Auction Catalogue of the Library of Hugh Goodyear English Reformed Minister at Leiden* (Utrecht: 1985) 5–6.

<sup>94</sup> Schoneveld lists the main archival detail available about Monck, also pointing out Browne's writing on tobacco: see Schoneveld C.W., *Sea-Changes* 340 and Browne T., *Works* ed. G. Keynes, 3.382–383. A further possible connection between Browne and the Separatists comes from the fact that the minister John Robinson's son was a medical student in 1633. See Harm Beukers's essay in this volume. For Robinson, see Robinson J., *The Works of John Robinson*, ed. R. Ashton, 3 vols (London: 1851) 3.343–378.

<sup>95</sup> Sprunger K.L., *English Puritanism: A History of English and Scottish Churches of the Netherlands in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Leiden: 1982) 124.

is refused here among the Dutch: The reason is, because they conceive him to be of a disagreeing [*sic*] disposition in generall; and in particular that he would governe his owne church with a more rigid discipline then is used or thought fitt by the Dutch Classis.<sup>96</sup>

Furthermore, there is evidence from the early 1630s that Goodyear, unhappy with the Presbyterian structure, was moving in the direction of an autonomous congregation, in keeping with his conviction that ‘orthodox words do not necessarily prove faith for membership or baptism. “Every assent is not faith.”<sup>97</sup>

Already in Leiden, then, Browne was privy to the debate over Laudian and Caroline religious culture in the England to which he would soon return. With the coming of 1633 and the reign of Archbishop William Laud (1573–1645), the strict disciplinarian Goodyear expressed displeasure about the likes of Goffe in his world, and was unsettled by and unhappy about the vocal congregants who were urging him to adopt the English prayer book and other Anglican ceremonies. In 1632, Goodyear had struggled to relieve his church of what he considered its tragic isolation from other legitimately Reformed churches. This proved difficult: on 1 July 1633, Goodyear complained in a letter to Ralph Smith that

the Lord hath placed me over a congregacion wch injoyeth the use of the ordinances, but wanteth [i.e. lacks] that power of godliness wch is in those rare Christians in Manchestr [sic] and there abut: some without the licencie of the English Churches here seek to bring us under the command of the service book in England and I hear that the cheife in England wil bring it in some congregacion, but cannot so easily bring it in ours.<sup>98</sup>

As D. Plooij explains, Episcopal churches could be found in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, the Hague, and Utrecht, so Goodyear had reason to worry about what he considered Laudian innovations, as surely as he was worried at the same time about the revitalized spread of Arminianism among the Dutch.<sup>99</sup> Goodyear himself was pretending to play along with the Caroline prescriptions by devising a catechism in these years – Charles I and Laud were eager to minimize the centrality of

<sup>96</sup> Quotations from Sprunger K.L., *English Puritanism* 129–130.

<sup>97</sup> Sprunger K.L., *English Puritanism* 131.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in Plooij D., *The Pilgrim Fathers from a Dutch Point of View* (New York: 1932) 107.

<sup>99</sup> Plooij D., *Pilgrim Fathers* 107.

sermons by emphasizing the gain in conformity to be had through afternoon catechisms. But Goodyear clearly disliked the Grotian affection for the Church of England, and he complained bitterly in 1633 about those members of his congregation who were pushing for more ceremonial, liturgical, and conformist services.

Of all the members of the Leiden faculty who sought a stable union of truth and peace in orthodoxy, the one that matters most for a study of Browne is Johannes Polyander. It has been speculated that in the 1640s Browne wrote a panegyric for this theologian and churchman on the occasion of his death. Although the attribution of the poem is highly doubtful at best, Polyander certainly figured prominently in Leiden as a hero of eirenic religion.<sup>100</sup> As A.J. Lamping has shown, Polyander was the preacher who, in 1611, was hired by the university to fulfil the difficult criteria of being at once solidly Counter-Remonstrant and sufficiently flexible regarding the Remonstrant position to mediate controversy. In his views of salvation, Polyander was a moderate, an infra-lapsarian who believed that election took place after the Fall. The prevailing view of Polyander in comparison to the other members of the theology faculty is that he was less scholarly but more practical, calm, tactful, elegant and adaptable to exigencies, a faithful Calvinist holding to the notion that understanding should be subordinated to piety. In one section of the *Synopsis*, on the Trinity, he offered a standard definition, then added that it is better to adore with humility than to risk a definition of the inexplicable mystery. Modest piety and 'perpetual celebration' trumped clever speculation.<sup>101</sup> In *Religio Medici*, Browne would soon confront the problem of how to adumbrate mystery so as to avoid arid definition without risking unorthodox speculations of his own. In a 1630 commentary on Ephesians, Polyander opposed a recent fondness for disputatious preaching about election and the other mysteries of the divine, and he urged readers to remember that none of us can fly that high in our understanding. Preaching ought to concern itself with the Lord's prayer, the Apostles' creed, the ten commandments, the sacraments, and the comfort that God's dispensations are supposed to yield us.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> For the attribution to Browne, see Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes 3.237. The author was in all likelihood Mathias Browne, a medical student at Leiden in the 1640s.

<sup>101</sup> Lamping A.J., *Johannes Polyander: Een dienaar van Kerk en Universiteit* (Leiden: 1980) 72–78, 102.

<sup>102</sup> Lamping A.J., *Johannes Polyander* 109–110.

Even if Thomas Browne wrote no verses for Polyander, it is unlikely that he would have left Leiden in 1633 without a strong sense of what this theologian meant to the university and indeed to Christendom. In 1633, Polyander was organizing student disputes against Socinianism: doing his best to prevent egregious heresy from infiltrating Dutch Reform. But he was also the most prudent and peaceful of the Leiden divines, his motto “*pie et prudenter*”. Schoneveld suggests, rightly, that Polyander would have represented to Browne the urgent need to purge those heretical tendencies of which *Religio Medici* includes a list,<sup>103</sup> and to ground his faith in orthodox authorities. But as preacher for the Walloons, contributor to the *Synopsis* and to the Dutch Bible, and a pacific force in public and private lives, Polyander would also have embodied the need for a purification that does not lapse into a contentious, persecutory dogmatism against which he peacefully strove. To the medical student seeking the religion of a physician, Polyander and Walaeus presented a united front.

### 5. Conclusion

Throughout his adult life Browne dressed with a Dutch plainness and resisted extravagant shows of theatrical humour.<sup>104</sup> In his inner life, Browne balanced moral discipline and vigilant orthodoxy with a generative curiosity that the experience of Leiden modelled in many ways, however briefly Browne was there. In the famous anatomy theatre and *hortus*, in the medical faculty’s caution about, yet interest in, new ideas, in its synoptic, infra-lapsarian theology, and in the combination of international humanism with fervent patriotism, the world of Leiden in 1633 underscored the ways in which industrious sobriety might frame curiosity and ground indeterminacy without ever quite threatening to quash them. Modifying his more playful, speculative, and fanciful wit, Browne’s Leiden degree epitomized a vocational utility and moral discipline that stayed with him and affected how he dressed, parented, dealt with emotion, and hunkered down in the watery regions of Norfolk.

<sup>103</sup> Schoneveld C.W., *Sea-Changes* 358.

<sup>104</sup> Whitefoot J., “Some Minutes for the Life of Sir Thomas Browne” in Browne T., *Posthumous Works* (London: 1712) xxviii, xxx.

In a passage included in both *Letter to a Friend* and *Christian Morals*, Browne urged upon his reader practical moral advice:

Consider where about thou art in Cebes's *Table*, or that old Philosophical *Pinax* of the Life of Man: whether thou art yet in the Road of uncertainties; whether thou has yet entred the narrow Gate, got up the Hill and asperous way, which leadeth unto the House of Sanity, or taken that purifying Potion from the hand of sincere Erudition, which may send thee clear and pure away unto a virtuous and happy life.<sup>105</sup>

Hanging in the anatomy theatre in Leiden was a detailed, elaborate engraving of this well-known allegory of the road of life, attributed to Cebes, a friend of Socrates. The engraving depicts at its outmost circle a group of children gathered around an elderly teacher – Genius – outside the Gates of Life and attended by Seduction. Curving upward past Lady Fortuna, those maturing travellers who make it past her distractions and beyond the wavering uncertainties of opinions, appetites, and companionships come in the second ring of the circular path to the study of the liberal arts. Those – far fewer – who persist still further make it to the tiny portal and the steep hill climbing upward to the abode of health, “*domicilium salutis*”. Only there do they find modesty, liberality, temperance, sincere erudition, truth and persuasion.<sup>106</sup> Having travelled from Montpellier to Padua, then over the Alps in search of his doctorate in medicine, Browne graduated into his professional life from a university that exhorted him always to take stock of where he was in the way of life on the road to both physical and spiritual health. Once back in England, he wrote a stock-taking account of his development thus far, and settled down into a vocation that he was to serve wisely and well.

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<sup>105</sup> Browne T, *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.243.

<sup>106</sup> Lunsingh Scheurleer T.H., “*Amphithéâtre*” 255–259.

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## STUDYING MEDICINE IN LEIDEN IN THE 1630s

Harm Beukers<sup>1</sup>

In order to understand why a foreign student like Thomas Browne chose Leiden University to take his doctoral degree, clarification of some of the special aspects of medical education in Leiden is necessary, as well as of the development of the medical faculty in the short period of its existence. That period encompassed barely sixty years before Browne's matriculation in 1633. Browne's stay in Leiden occurred between two major phases of the faculty's history. In the first place, the University had just obtained a more definitive organization with the new statutes of October 1631, which replaced the original statutes of 1575. In the second, the medical faculty was about to flourish, starting in the 1650s with the appointments of Franciscus de le Boë (Sylvius, 1614–1672) famous for his iatrochemistry and bedside teaching, and Johannes van Horne (1621–1670), who pioneered anatomical research. Records show that Leiden attracted many students from abroad in the seventeenth century. What was the nature of the "Leiden career" of Thomas Browne and his English-speaking peer group?

### 1. *The Beginning*

At the time of Thomas Browne's matriculation Leiden University had become a mature institution. The State of Holland, the Curators of the University and the Burgomasters of Leiden could look back upon a successful venture after a doubtful beginning, since the foundation of university had occurred with considerable rapidity. William of Orange

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<sup>1</sup> Editors' note. This contribution arose out of a panel discussion on the study, teaching and practice of seventeenth-century medical science at Leiden University held during the Thomas Browne conference in October 2006. The editors are most grateful to Professor Beukers for writing it up in this form, to Professor Manfred Horstmanshoff for taking part in the discussion, and to all those who contributed from the "floor". It has been decided to render the conversational tone in the form of a more archivally-based research paper that is most usefully read with that of Professor Reid Barbour, whose contribution to the discussion is also much appreciated here.

presented a proposal for a university on 28 December 1574. As early as 3 January 1575 the State of Holland approved the proposal, and one month later, on 8 February, the inauguration (*Dies Natalis*) took place. Three medical doctors participated: Pieter van Foreest (Petrus Forestus, 1521–1597), assigned to teach medicine; Laurens van Oorschot (*fl.* 1575) for Greek; and Gerardus Bontius (1536–1599) for the *artes liberales*. The speedy establishment of the university resulted in the unusual situation of professorial appointments for the medical faculty having been made before there were any students. In fact, the first medical student, an Englishman named Jacobus James, matriculated in 1578. Both van Foreest and van Oorschot returned to Delft after their inaugural addresses, where they had previously acted as town physicians. Bontius, the town physician of Leiden, was now entrusted with medicine as well as the liberal arts. By the end of the sixteenth century the medical faculty had filled its customary number of professorships: three ordinary, and one extra-ordinary. The Statues of 1631 made this situation permanent.

Leiden University was set up as a Protestant institution right from the beginning, but it was not the intention of the founders to bind the professors and students to one true faith. The Dutch Reformed Church was only a public church, not a state church. It had no legal power in the appointments regarding the chairs of theology and philosophy. Only after the Synod of Dort (1618–1619), when the Contra-Remonstrants prevailed over the Remonstrants, did a particular denominational influence develop.<sup>2</sup> The States-General sanctioned the resolutions of the Synod, and in consequence the State of Holland decided to purge the University personnel. Two of the three Curators, suspected of Remonstrant sympathies, were replaced, and the new College of Curators freed the University from Remonstrant influences, especially in the faculty of theology.<sup>3</sup> The Remonstrant theologian Simon Bischop (Episcopius, 1583–1643) was dismissed in 1619, while the more moderate Johannes Polyander (1568–1646) continued in office, and three new professors were appointed. The new faculty members Antonius

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<sup>2</sup> The Synod of Dort established the orthodoxy within the Dutch Reformed Church. The Remonstrants held Arminian beliefs, including insistence on the importance of human free will in salvation, and that Christ had died for all, not just the elect. They were defeated at Dort and Calvinist interpretation of Scripture and salvation prevailed.

<sup>3</sup> Curators had general superintendence over the faculties of the university, and the power to appoint professors.

Walaeus (1573–1639), Anthonius Thysius (1603–1665, appointed 1619) and Andreas Rivetus (1572–1651, appointed 1620) were perceived as sound in the Protestant faith. The medical faculty remained unaffected by these changes. Concerning the students, the Statutes of 1631 now required an extra oath concerning Calvinist doctrine, but only from students of theology.<sup>4</sup> The general oaths, to be taken by all students in front of the Rector Magnificus, demanded only obedience to the Rector, the Curators and the Senate, and no proof of adherence to one faith. The Curators did not try to split hairs. In their decisions, regulations and appointments they tried to steer a moderate course, as they did in later disputes such as those concerning Cartesianism.

## 2. *Matriculation and Promotion*

In contrast to universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, the curriculum and the length of study at Leiden were not included in the Statutes. The only prescription was that the public courses be completed within three or four years (art. VI). Because no complete set of *Series lectiones*, stipulating the content of courses, is extant before 1658, we know little about the actual situation. The new Statutes were more detailed on the subject of matriculation. Thus it was now specified that students should matriculate within eight days after their arrival in Leiden, and that the minimum age was twelve. The fee for matriculation remained unchanged.<sup>5</sup> The students were not allowed to assemble in *nationes* (associations of students from the same regions or countries (art. XX)). Even so, foreign students tended to rent rooms in houses where compatriots lived. The new Statutes gave a detailed description of how to proceed to the doctorate, introducing a private examination (art. XXVII), as well as an explanation and interpretation of two Hippocratic aphorisms (art. XXX) before the defence of the *Theses disputandas* (short statements for public disputation) took place. There were no special requirements to admit candidates to the doctorate: not even that students had to have taken degrees in Arts before entering the medical course. The professor had only to inquire how long the

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<sup>4</sup> Molhuysen P.C., *Bronnen tot de Geschiedenis der Leidse Universiteit* II ('s-Gravenhage: 1916) 261\*, art. XIX.

<sup>5</sup> Molhuysen P.C., *Bronnen* II 259\*, art. XIII.

candidate had studied in the medical faculty, and in particular about his conduct.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence the length of residence, particularly of foreign students, could vary from days to years.

### 3. *Instruction at Leiden*

Leiden University's aim was to offer a modernized medical education. The plan was unfolded by the theologian Guillaume de Feugeray (Feugeraeus, d. 1613) in his “hypotyposis” at the “second opening” of the University on 6 July 1575, when the courses officially started. De Feugeray – presumably inspired by the model of Padua – suggested that medical students should not only attend traditional lectures and disputations, but should also learn from practical exercises in anatomy, botany, chemistry and at the bedside.<sup>7</sup> The necessary circumstances for instruction in these subjects were gradually introduced. The botanical garden and the anatomy theatre were finished almost twenty years later. The *Collegium Medico-practicum*, the course in bedside teaching, was introduced in 1636 and the chemistry laboratory in 1669. This offered the possibility of teaching by demonstration, in addition to the ordinary lectures.

The University used the botanical garden and the anatomy theatre as what amounted to a publicity campaign, to propagate its new approach in teaching. In 1610 four copper engravings, after drawings by Jan Cornelisz Woudt (Woudanus, 1570–1615), were issued. They represented the library, the fencing school, the anatomy theatre and the botanical garden. This series of reproductions strongly helped to create a distinctive image of the university. They were frequently copied and inserted in books such as Johannes Meursius's (1579–1639) *Athenae Batavae* (1625). They showed the world that Leiden University was well equipped with a number of unique institutions. The *legenda* appended to the drawing of the botanical garden, for example, explain in German, Latin and French that the garden possessed not only rare plants, herbs and flowers, but also, in its *ambulacrum* – a covered walkway – curiosities from the East and West Indies.

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<sup>6</sup> Molhuysen P.C., *Bronnen* II 262\*, art. XXIII.

<sup>7</sup> Kroon J.E., *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis van het Geneeskundig Onderwijs aan de Leidsche Universiteit 1575–1625* (Leiden: 1911) 12.

4. *The Professors*

Investment in the institutions discussed above contrasted with that in professors of the medical faculty. It took a relatively long time before the faculty was fully staffed. One of the reasons was that at first the number of students matriculating in medicine was low compared with the other faculties. In the period 1576–1586 the average number was less than five per year, while the average annual matriculations in the faculties of arts, law and theology were 38, 25 and 11 respectively.<sup>8</sup> It was only in 1581 that Johannes Heurnius (1543–1601) was appointed as professor of medicine alongside Bontius. One year later the faculty welcomed a third member in Rembert Dodoens (Dodonaeus, 1517–1585), who however only occupied the position for four years before his death. The third position remained vacant until 1589 with the appointment of Pieter Pauw (Petrus Pavius, 1564–1617) as professor of anatomy and botany.

For the next generation of medical professors the Curators found a relatively inexpensive solution, by selecting new members of the medical faculty from among the sons of professors. Thus Otto Heurnius (1577–1652) succeeded his father Johannes in 1601, and Pauw as professor of anatomy in 1617. Regnerus Bontius (1576–1623), son of the first professor of medicine Gerardus, was appointed extraordinary professor of natural philosophy and medicine in 1603. Adolph Vorstius (1597–1665) succeeded his father Aelius Everhardus Vorstius (1565–1624) as professor of botany and *Institutiones* (theoretical foundations of medicine) in 1624. An exception to this situation was the appointment of Carolus Clusius (Charles de l'Écluse, 1526–1609). He was one of the most renowned botanists in Europe, author and editor of a number of essential botanical books, and from 1573–1577 *praefectus* of the imperial medical garden in Vienna. The Curators were prepared to subvent a large sum for his transfer to Leiden to supervise the organization of the botanical garden. Although Clusius was then already 66 years old and disabled in one leg, he accepted the offer by the Curators in 1592 on condition that he was exempted from public lectures and demonstrations of *naturalia* in the winter semester, and that he received compensation for travel and transport expenses. His instruction in the

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<sup>8</sup> Otterspeer W, *Groepsportret met Dame. I. Het bolwerk van de vrijheid, de Leidse Universiteit 1575–1672* (Amsterdam: 2000) 142.

*hortus* was limited to one hour in the afternoon during the summer.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, the actual work in the garden was carried out by a *hortulanus*, the pharmacist Dirck Cluyt (Theodorus Clutius, ca. 1546–1598). Clusius's annual salary was 690 guilders, but even this was surpassed by Johannes Heurnius, primarius professor of medicine, who received 800 guilders. His colleagues Gerardus Bontius and Pieter Pauw received 600 and 500 guilders respectively.<sup>10</sup>

### 5. *Praxis medicinae*

Johannes Heurnius was, apart from Clusius, the only professor of medicine who had earned a wider reputation, thanks to considerable number of publications and his relations with prominent humanists. It was with good reason that he was primarius professor of the medical faculty, promoted above Gerardus Bontius, who had been appointed earlier. His public lectures, published posthumously by his son Otto as *Opera omnia*, formed the basis of medical tuition by his successors. They covered both the *Institutiones medicinae* – the theory of medicine, including a ‘modus studendi’ – and the *Praxis medicinae*. The latter was constructed systematically: first the principles of general therapy, published as *Praxis medicinae nova ratio*; followed by the *Praxis medicinae particularis*, a series of seven courses dealing with diseases of the different parts of the body. The lessons had a theoretical character and the professors of medicine were aware that a practical course under their supervision was necessary. To that end Heurnius and Bontius presented, in 1591, a proposal to introduce bedside teaching, as they had experienced it during their study in Padua. The proposal was probably not accepted by the Curators. This left only extra-curricular opportunities for practical training: students could attend the visits of town physicians to the hospital, or post-mortems conducted by Heurnius.<sup>11</sup>

A well-balanced course had to be steered within the medical faculty as far as tuition in theory and practice was concerned. In the *materia*

<sup>9</sup> Hunger F.W.T., *Charles de l'Escluse, Nederlandsch kruidkundige 1526–1609 I* ('s-Gravenhage: 1927) 191–193.

<sup>10</sup> Witkam H.J., *Dagelijksche Zaken van de Leidse Universiteit van 1581 tot 1596 V* (Leiden: 1973) 152.

<sup>11</sup> Heurnius referred to different autopsies in his posthumously published *De morbis pectoris* (Leiden: 1602).

*medica* course, two types of instruction were introduced: *lectura*, theoretical lectures on the basis of classical authors; and *ostensio*, demonstrations of *naturalia* in the botanical garden or *ambulacrum*. As mentioned earlier, instruction in medical practice lacked patients for purposes of demonstration. The use of records of individual patients offered a solution for the ‘*praxis medicinae*’. They were introduced in two different ways. Heurnius himself used the so-called *consilia* in Fernel’s *Universa medicina*:<sup>12</sup> that is to say, descriptions of particular cases and the appropriate treatment. They were used as written guides to treat similar cases. Their primary purpose was not to record observations but to recommend treatment. For observations, another means by which to illustrate medical practice, Heurnius referred to his friend Pieter van Foreest’s series of *Observationes et curationes medicinales* in 32 books. The *Observationes* were accurate case-histories or records of van Foreest’s own experiences with diseases and their treatment, followed by *scholia*, detailed commentaries on the observations.

#### 6. *The Role of Classical Authors*

In spite of attempts to illustrate medical practice by contemporary examples, classical sources remained important. The case of Heurnius is particularly relevant. He studied for three years in Paris under Louis Duret (Ludovicus Duretus, 1527–1586), who held Hippocrates in high esteem, and edited the *Prognostica*. That Heurnius shared Duretus’s views is evident from his posthumously published annotations to ‘Hippocrates’, works, *In praecipuos libros Hippocratis Coi commentaria* (1609). In his teachings Heurnius combined an appreciation for classical authors with illustrations from his own experiences (indicated in the texts as “*historia*” and “*exemplum practicum*”), as is shown in the frequently reprinted *Hippocrates, Aphorismi Graece et Latine* (1601). These works demonstrated Heurnius’s wide reading in the classical authors. One of his achievements was the rediscovery of Caelius Aurelianus, an almost forgotten Latin author of books on acute and chronic diseases. Heurnius used these treatises in the description of the special diseases.

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<sup>12</sup> Jean Fernel, *Joannis Fernelii Universa Medicina [...] nunc notis, etc. Joan. et Oth. Heurnii illustrata* (Utrecht: 1656).

Father and son Vorstius continued the humanist orientation. Aelius Everardus Vorstius was well prepared for such an approach: he had studied Greek and history under Bonaventura Vulcanius (1538–1614) and Justus Lipsius (1547–1606), before entering medical study. On the recommendation of Josephus Justus Scaliger (1540–1609) he was appointed extraordinary professor of philosophy in 1598. One year later he succeeded Gerardus Bontius as ordinary professor of medicine. In 1604, for instance, he taught Paulus Aegineta's (?625–?690) *De morbis particulares*. In 1617 he was made responsible for the course in botany and the supervision of the botanical garden. Among the manuscripts he left behind was an unfinished commentary on Celsus's *De Medicina*, probably to be used for a new edition.<sup>13</sup> Adolph Vorstius's interest in the classical authors had been aroused by his father's teacher Vulcanius. He concentrated on the study of languages, as well as on medicine, including lectures by Thomas van Erpe (Erpenius, 1584–1624) on Arabic. During his professorship (1624–1663), Adolph not only paid attention to well-known authors such Hippocrates, Galen and Celsus, but also to obscure authors such as Alexander Trallianus. He planned the revision and edition of the commentary on Hippocrates' *Aphorisms* by the seventh-century Byzantine physician Theophilus Protospatharius. To this end he had acquired the manuscript from the Royal Library in Paris,<sup>14</sup> but the project was cut short by his death. The same was the case with a planned *Commentarius* on Theophrastus, on which he had been working for many years.<sup>15</sup>

## 7. *The Faculty of Arts*

These few examples show that, in spite of the new program, the Leiden medical professors still emphasized the critical explanation and edition of classical texts, and thus the search for reliable texts by original authors. A profound study of the medical classics was still considered a principal and essential tool for medical students to acquire medical

<sup>13</sup> Suringar G.C.B., “De Medische Faculteit te Leiden, in het begin van de zeventiende eeuw”, *Nederlandsch Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde* (1861) 641.

<sup>14</sup> Bartolini T., *Epistolarum Medicinalium Centuria IV* (Copenhagen: 1663–1667) 352.

<sup>15</sup> Van der Linden J.A., *Oratio funebris in Cl. V. Adolphi Vorstii, medicinae & botanices professoris primarii excessum oratio funebris* (Leiden: 1664).

knowledge. The philological tradition was thus important in the medical faculty too. In this the medical faculty fitted itself well to the aims of its first Curator Jan van der Does (Janus Dousa, 1545–1604) and secretary Jan van Hout (1542–1609): to create a humanist university with a faculty of arts at its centre. To achieve that aim the Curators spared no trouble or expense. The best-known example is the arrival of Josephus Julius Scaliger as successor to Justus Lipsius in 1593. He accepted the invitation on condition that he was exempted from public lectures and from being present at senate meetings. In addition to the maximum salary of 1,200 guilders per year, Scaliger received another 800 guilders paid by the States of Holland. The States also compensated the rent for his house. The total amount needed to persuade Scaliger amounted to well over 7,000 guilders.<sup>16</sup> A comparison with the highest salaries in the four faculties in 1600 demonstrates the importance of the faculty of arts in the view of the Curators. Scaliger, with an annual salary of 2,000 guilders, was followed by Franciscus Junius (theology, 1545–1602) with 1,200 guilders, Johannes Heurnius (medicine) with 1,000 guilders and Everard Bronckhorst (law, 1554–1627) with 900 guilders. Even in 1632 the University valued the coming of a famous humanist highly. The appointment of Claude Saumaise (Claudius Salmasius, 1588–1653) in that year conformed to the conditions under which Scaliger had been persuaded: exemption from public lectures, free housing and an extremely high salary.

When Thomas Browne matriculated, the faculty of arts had, in spite of Gerard Vossius's (1577–1649) departure in 1631, international prestige with Daniel Heinsius (Greek and history, 1580–1655), Jacob van Gool (Golius, Arabic and mathematics, 1596–1667) and Saumaise. The faculty of medicine consisted then of Otto Heurnius (*Institutiones medicae* and anatomy), Adrianus Falcoburgius (anatomy and surgery, 1581–1650), Adolph Vorstius (botany and *institutiones*) and Ewaldus Schrevelius (*praxis medicinae*, 1575–1647). None of them reached the fame of Heinsius, van Gool or Saumaise. Johannes Walaeus (1604–1649), son of the theology professor Antonius Walaeus, was appointed extraordinary professor of medicine, but enjoyed an international reputation only after publishing support of Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood. Given that the members of the medical faculty were less well-known to foreign

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<sup>16</sup> Otterspeer W., *Groepsportret* 179.

students, such students' choice of Leiden was probably inspired by the fame of her humanistic scholars: Lipsius, Scaliger, Vossius, Saumaise, Heinsius and van Gool.

### 8. *English-Speaking Students 1631–1635*

In order to analyse how typical Thomas Browne's Leiden experiences were, compared with other English-speaking students, a sample was taken from the period 1631–1635. Browne matriculated during the rectorship of Antonius Thysius (8 February 1633–8 February 1634). The total number of English-speaking students in that year was 30, which was high compared with an average of 18 for the period 1631–1635 (see Table 1). A total of 59 students matriculated as students of medicine:<sup>17</sup> 27 were foreigners, among them seven "Anglo-Saxon" students. To that number three should be added, because they enrolled without reference to a faculty or enrolled as *philosophiae studiosus*. Although the absolute number of English-speaking medical students in 1633 was also relatively high (10) for the period 1631–1635, the contribution of these students to the total number of English-speaking students was only 33 %, which is about the average (37 %).

Medical students represented the largest group (30 %) of the English-speaking students matriculating in 1633, followed by humanities students (23 %), theology students (13 %) and law students (7 %) (table 2: see appendix below, p. 62). Among the students who did not register under a particular faculty, some were noblemen with their servant or tutor.

There was a tendency among Anglo-Saxon students to live together or to find accommodation in houses of compatriots. The three medical students Joannes Bouggs (Buggs), Wolufrandt (Wolfram) Smith and Samuel Reminton (Remington), who matriculated on 11 May 1633, shared a house on the Papengracht. Buggs and Smith graduated in Leiden, Remington in 1636 in Padua.

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<sup>17</sup> In addition a group of mainly Dutch students matriculated for philosophy and medicine.

Table 1. English speaking students in the period 1631–1635.<sup>18</sup>

	1631	1632	1633	1634	1635	Average
Total number of students	428	460	518	429	351	437.2
English-speaking students	8	19	30	19	13	17.8
English-speaking medical students	7	9	10	4	3	6.6
% medical students	88 %	47 %	33 %	21 %	23 %	37 %

The Monck family in the Sonneveldsteeg provided accommodation for the arts students Johannes (John) Grey and Jeremias Monck, as well as for Thomas Browne. Jeremias Monck, in spite of the reference as ‘*Anglus Londinensis*’, lived with his parents in Leiden. He matriculated at 14 together with seven classmates as senior pupils of Leiden’s Latin School. Another representative of the English community in Leiden who matriculated in 1633 was Johannes Robinsonus (John Robinson, *fl.* 1622–1658). He was the son of the reverend John Robinson (1575–1625), minister of the “Pilgrims”, who remained with his family in Leiden while his congregation embarked for America.<sup>19</sup> He, like Browne, later settled in Norwich, and he referred to Browne on the title-page of his *Endoxa*, which included some corrections to *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, as ‘fellow citizen and collegian’.<sup>20</sup>

The careers of the English-speaking students in Leiden show two distinct patterns (table 3: see appendix below, p. 63). According to the criteria developed by Underwood, only one student, Johannes Sherwodus (Sherwood) graduated within the average period of between six months and about two years.<sup>21</sup> The other students fell into two groups. Three students, Johannes Clarcq, Rogerus Goodyear and Johannes Regius, remained four years or more at Leiden before graduating. They were relatively young when they matriculated: the average age was

<sup>18</sup> The numbers are based on *Album Studiosorum Academiae Lugduno Batavae 1575–1875* (Leiden: 1875).

<sup>19</sup> Burgess W.H., *John Robinson, Pastor of the Pilgrim Fathers* (London: 1920) 351.

<sup>20</sup> Robinson J., *Endoxa, or, Some probable enquiries into Truth [...] as also, a calm ventilation of Pseudo-doxia Epidemica* (London: 1658). The “Preface” refers to Browne as ‘my honoured friend’ (\*1<sup>1</sup>). The references also appear in the Latin version published two years earlier: *Endoxa, seu, Quaestionum quarundam miscellanearum examen probabile [...] una cum Pseudodoxiae epidemicæ, ventilatione tranquilla* (London: 1656).

<sup>21</sup> Underwood E.A., *Boerhaave’s Men at Leyden and after* (Edinburgh: 1977) distinguishes three classes for the duration of study of English-speaking students: class S (‘short-term’), less than 7 months; class A (‘average-term’) 7–28 months; and class L (‘long-term’) 29 months and over.

23 years. Thus far no indications suggest that they took an academic degree before coming to Leiden. It seems that they completed the whole course, as proposed in art. VI of the new Statutes. The youngest of the three, Johannes Regius, matriculated as *philosophiae studiosus* and stayed the longest period in Leiden (about 4½ years), suggesting that he first attended courses in the humanities faculty. A larger category – including Joannes Houghton, Samuel Remminton, Levinus Fluvius and Robertus Child – entered Leiden at a relatively young age (average 23 years old), and took their degree three or four years later in Padua.

The largest group of eight students, however, spent at most six months in Leiden before matriculating and graduating. The group included Guylhelmus Prujean (2 days), Johannes Spenser (2 days), Thomas Browne (18 days), Robertus Brownlow (1 month), Guyhelmus Browns (1½ months), Joannes Bouggs (2 months), David Balfour (4 months) and Wolufrandt Smith (6 months). The average age of this group was higher, 30 years old, suggesting that they studied elsewhere, a deduction that the careers of two students in this group confirm. Both Spenser and Browne had obtained an M.A. from Oxford and studied in Padua, before arriving in Leiden.

### 9. *Thomas Browne in Leiden*

Thomas Browne's stay in Leiden was thus relatively short. Apparently he graduated under article XXIII of the new Statutes, which accepted certain criteria as equivalent to equivalent to attendance at certain courses. The exact duration of Browne's stay is not known, since the *recensieboeken* (registers) for this period (1622–1650) are lost. Whatever the exact duration was, it seemed that Browne belonged to the category of students who had gone to Leiden merely in order to graduate. He arrived in December when the semester of public lectures was gradually coming to an end. The holidays began on Christmas Eve and continued to 7 January. The period from 1 to 21 February (when students had to confirm their matriculation) was another period of holidays.<sup>22</sup> Visits to the famous botanical garden were impossible during the winter, but its supervisor, Adolph Vorstius, was available. An appendix to Browne's

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<sup>22</sup> Molhuysen P.C., *Bronnen* II 267\*, art. XLI.

copy of Spigelius's *Isagoge in rem herbarium* (Leiden: 1633) contains the 1633 appendix to the *Catalogus plantarum horti Academicus Lugduno-Batavi*, suggesting at least Browne's interest in the botanical garden.<sup>23</sup> Among the faculty members (the ordinary professors Otto Heurnius, Falcoburgius, Schrevelius and the extraordinary professor J. Walaeus), Vorstius was then the most prominent, although probably not well-known internationally. In any case, thanks to his father, the name Vorstius had a certain prestige among botanists. The fame of the botanical garden and its supervisors, Clusius and Aelius Everardus and Adolph Vorstius, may have been a factor for Browne in choosing to graduate at Leiden. It may also be that Browne's choice was not determined by the status of the medical faculty, its professors or its institutions, but by the status of the university as an institution with a strong humanistic tradition. During the 1630s, as we have seen, the legacy of Lipsius and Scaliger was continued by scholars such as Saumaise, Heinsius and van Gool. Physicians still relied on ancient authors and the critical editions of ancient medical texts remained important, even for medical practice. What, then, could bestow more prestige than graduating at a university where the philological tradition was still highly valued, even (and especially) among medical professors?

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<sup>23</sup> Finch J.S., *A Catalogue of the Libraries of Sir Thomas Browne and Dr Edward Browne, his son* (Leiden: 1986) 95. For Browne's botanical interests see Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005), esp. chapter 6: "The epitome of the earth: *The Garden of Cyrus* and verdancy".

Table 2. English-speaking students matriculating during the rectorship of Thysius (1633–1634).<sup>24</sup>

Date	Name	Fac	Age	Living
20.02	Stephanus Goffe, Anglus	T	26	apud Lodov. de Dieu
21.02	Robertus Wildigos, Anglus	L	17	apud Franciscum du Bon
23.03	Somerset Fox, Anglus nobilis	—	15	in de Diefsteeg apud Ludov. de Sineoff
23.03	Carolus Gerard, Anglus Lancastrensis	—	14	ibidem habitat
23.03	Henricus Hurste, Lancastrensis, inspector duorum praecedentium nobilium	—	25	apud eundem hospitem
05.04	Johannes Robinsonus, Nordovico Anglus	—	27	habitat apud matrem viduam D. Joh. Robinson in de Clocksteeg
10.04	Johannes Hinten, Anglus Londinensis	M	30	in Platea Lata
22.04	Jeremias Monck, Anglus Londinensis	—	14	apud parentes in de Sonneveldsteeg bij Joannes Monck
26.04	Mattheus Thoris, Anglus Londinensis	T	23	in 't Wapen van Loo
11.05	Joannes Bouggs, Anglus Londinensis	M	30	op de Papengraft bij van Noortsant
11.05	Wolfrandt Smith, Londinensis	M	24	ibidem habitat
11.05	Samuel Reminton, natus Nordowici	—	24	ibidem
05.06	Johannes Marle, Londinensis Anglus	M	26	habitat op Sint Jacobsgraft bij Simon Noret
22.06	Johannes Sherwodus, Nordwicensis Anglus	M	28	apud Jacobum Sartortin
19.07	Guilielmus Willoughby, Anglus Lincoliensis	L	20	habitat apud Johannem Henricum Scoht[!] in Platea Rapenburgh
20.08	Guilielmus Barlaeus, Anglus Londinensis	T	22	apud Johannem Jennings
02.09	Eduwardus Rooh, Huesdanus, famulus D. Guiliemi Willougbij, nobilis Angli	—	22	commoratur apud Johannem Ludovico Schot
03.09	Leonardus Wilson, Londinensis	T	26	apud Jennincks
12.09	Richardus Doughteius, Anglus Oxoniensis	L&P	22	apud profess. Holtzlinum
08.10	Johannes Greyus, Londinensis	L	30	apud Monck in Platea Sonneveld
13.10	Richardus Boylo, Anglus	J	21	—
13.10	Carolus Cortrel, Anglus	P	20	—
13.10	Guilielmus Ball, Hybernus	J	26	—
13.10	Ambrosius With, famulus	—	30	—
13.10	Terentius Kannach, Hybernus, famulus	—	20	—
03.12	<u>Thomas Braun, Anglus Londinensis</u>	M	29	apud Richardum Monck in Sonneveldsteeg
23.12	Johannes Regius, Londinensis	P	20	op Rapenborch bij Victor de Montbusson
24.12	David Adamsonus, Scotus	M	20	bij Richaert Eyr op Pieter Kerckgraft
24.01	Richardus Grenvill, Baro Anglus	Mat	33	bij Judley Rorhet op de Straet van den Haghe, met sijn dienaer
24.01	Walter Spenser	—	—	ejusdem famulus

J. – Juris studiosus; L. – Litterarum studiosus; Mat. – Matheseos studiosus; M. – Medicinac studiosus; P. – Philosophiae studiosus; T. – Theologiae studiosus.

<sup>24</sup> University Library Leiden, Archief Senaat en Faculteiten 9, “Volumen inscriptionum 1631–1645”.

Table 3. English-speaking medical students in Leiden, 1631–1635.<sup>25</sup>

Name	Age	Matriculation	Graduation	Duration
Gylbertus Grey	25	—	01.03.1631	matr. Padua 1635
Rogerus Goodyear	27	06.07.1627 [22y]	27.06.1631	M.D. Leiden 08.11.1631
Robertus Brownlow	22	—	08.08.1631	M.D. Leiden 05.09.1631
Guyhelmus Browns	44	—	15.09.1631	M.D. Leiden 01.11.1631
John Oxenbridge	25	—	19.09.1631	—
Richardus Hopperus	27	—	17.10.1631	—
Guyhelmus Prujean	28	—	12.12.1631	M.D. Leiden 23.12.1631
Nathaniel Charpey	24	—	21.05.1632	—
Gulielmus Parker	22	—	22.05.1632	M.D. Bourges 1633/34
Rudolphus Coningsby	30	—	29.05.1632	matr. Leiden 24.03.1639
Geoffrey Leneve	50	—	15.06.1632	M.D. Franeker 1632
Joannes Houghton	24	—	02.07.1632	M.D. Padua 1636
Patritius Sandelants	38	—	28.07.1632	—
Joannes Sondes	24	—	05.08.1632	—
Robertus Dunaeus	25	—	11.09.1632	M.D. university unknown
Robertus Dunster	37	20.07.1621 [27y]	20.11.1632	—
Samuel Rhedius	22	—	03.12.1632	—
Johannes Robinson	27	12.04.1622 [17y]	05.04.1633	M.D. Caen 1630
Johannes Hinten	30	—	10.04.1633	—
Joannes Bouggs	30	—	11.05.1633	M.D. Leiden 15.07.1633
Wolufrandt Smith	24	—	11.05.1633	M.D. Leiden 24.11.1633
Samuel Reminton	24	—	11.05.1633	M.D. Padua 1636
Johannes Marle	26	—	05.06.1633	—
Johannes Sherwodus	28	—	22.06.1633	M.D. Leiden 28.06.1634
Thomas Browne	29	—	03.12.1633	M.D. Leiden 21.12.1633
Johannes Regius	20	—	23.12.1633	M.D. Leiden 13.07.1638
David Adamsonus	20	—	24.12.1633	matr. Leiden 02.03.1634
David Balfour	36	—	25.02.1634	M.D. Leiden 06.07.1634
Levinus Fluvius	21	—	25.07.1634	M.D. Padua 1639
Johannes Spenser	30	—	16.09.1634	M.D. Leiden 18.09.1634
Johannes Sadler	24	—	06.03.1635	M.D. Franeker 1635
Robert Child	22	—	23.05.1635	M.D. Padua 1636
Gulielmus Hart	56	—	10.07.1635	—
Johannes Clarcq	21	—	17.07.1635	M.D. Leiden 29.07.1639
				48 m

<sup>25</sup> Based on *Album Studiosorum*, and Innes Smith W.A., *English-speaking Students of medicine at the University of Leyden* (Edinburgh: 1932).

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PART II  
READING AND WRITING



## ‘A FRESH READING OF BOOKS’: SOME NOTE-TAKING PRACTICES OF THOMAS BROWNE

Antonia Moon

Thomas Browne’s published writings are clearly the fruits of careful reading and close observation. These activities are partly documented in his extant note-books, a collection of bound and composite manuscript volumes that date mainly from the last twenty years of his life. They are an unusual surviving example of a collection of working note-books from this period and they shed light not only, as might be expected, on the literary development of certain passages towards their printed form but also on the practices and interests of one who was not solely a writer but, equally, an active reader and naturalist. Browne’s editors have printed some of the more legible sections from them, often conflating or rearranging material under their own subject headings; editors have also printed variant readings of certain passages that appear in printed texts.<sup>1</sup> Although a consideration of Browne’s production is clearly incomplete without considering these volumes, surprisingly, they have received almost no critical analysis.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, it seems timely to begin to examine his notes, to see what they can tell us of his working practices and consequently of his intentions for his own “production”, broadly conceived.

Both in subject and in kind, Browne’s manuscript notes are wide-ranging. The surviving volumes include observations on medicine, natural history and language, extracts from other authors’ works, details of foreign customs, copies of letters and verses, recipes and reflections on moral themes. Some of the observations were later published in *Posthumous Works* (1712); several of the ethical passages also appear, in

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<sup>1</sup> The main editions of Browne’s works that include extracts from his notebooks are: *Sir Thomas Browne’s Works Including his Life and Correspondence*, ed. S. Wilkin, 4 vols (London: 1836); *The Works of Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964); *The Prose of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. N. Endicott (New York: 1967). Transcriptions are also included in the textual commentary of *Religio Medici and Other Works*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: 1964).

<sup>2</sup> They have been well explicated, however. See Beal P, *Index of Literary Manuscripts, Vol. 2 Part 1, 1625–1700 Behn-King* (London: 1987) 7–13.

revised form, in *Christian Morals* (1716). A strong feature of the writings is the concern that they show to pass on knowledge to Browne's son, Edward (1644–1708); notes on medicine and on foreign travel, in particular, seem to have been designed to benefit both father and son. Here, I shall discuss some notes of a particular kind, those taken from Browne's own reading. While the evidence of Browne's reading in his printed works has attracted a small amount of critical comment, his quotations at note-book stage have not been studied in any detail.<sup>3</sup> These notes do not make up a large proportion of the whole but they are representative of Browne's approach to note-taking generally. Rather than surveying what Browne read, I shall concentrate on how he read it. Confining my enquiry to two note-books that are particularly rich in quotation, British Library Sloane MSs. 1866 and 1869, I shall consider the kind of detail that Browne abstracts from his sources, the ways in which he records it and what he does with the material once he has set it down.

Browne's focus, I suggest, falls less upon the ends of his note-taking than upon the act of gathering and offering material. This emphasis upon activity is consistent with his approach in his published writings. Recently, Claire Preston has valuably drawn attention to the civil virtues that underpin the major works, highlighting Browne's commitment to a kind of collective, scholarly enquiry that depended for its success on the co-operative, modest and generous conduct of its participants.<sup>4</sup> Browne's own civil persona is shown at its most sophisticated in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, in which he carefully situates himself as a courteous mediator between his bookish sources and his fellow enquirers. Viewed in this light, civility is a dynamic quality. It incorporates a judicious approach not only to one's audiences but also to one's sources. In his note-books, Browne shows something of this same activity at work. As we shall see, he adjusts his note-taking according to the kind of source that he is consulting and, in his most crafted notes, begins to mediate between his sources and his prospective audiences. While the notes plainly show the influence of the humanist practices in which

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<sup>3</sup> For Browne's use of sources in his printed works, see Cawley R.R., "Sir Thomas Browne and his Reading", in Cawley R.R. – Yost G. (eds.), *Studies in Sir Thomas Browne* (Eugene, OR: 1965) 104–166; Browne, T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. R. Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford: 1981) xxxiv–xxxix.

<sup>4</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) 27–35.

he had been trained, Browne can be distinguished from more “goal-oriented” note-takers in this tradition. In contrast to readers with a strong public-service involvement, men such as John Dee (1527–1609) and Sir William Drake (1606–1669) whose reading has been the subject of recent critical analysis, he does not direct his material towards particular worldly ambitions.<sup>5</sup> Neither, unlike compilers of the commonplace book in its pure form, does he limit the future application of his material by placing it under pre-determined headings.<sup>6</sup> Instead, he arranges his notes loosely, exploring and developing them within the space of the note-book itself. The dynamic character of his notes can be readily appreciated by comparing them with those of his son, Edward, whose simple records of things observed and places seen show little effort to re-work the information that he gathers.<sup>7</sup> For Browne, something like the result of a scientific experiment might suggest further investigations: ‘3 grains of opium workes strongly upon a dogge [underlined]. Observe how much will take place with a horse, wch [is a wonderfull animall, *deleted*] subsisteth with little sleep.’<sup>8</sup> Whether consulting the physical world or his books, his practice is essentially the same. The more a source lends itself to being transformed, the more Browne tends to transform it. He shapes his most promising material for a use beyond the purely personal; in this, he shows the beginnings of a civil approach in action.

First, the character of the note-books can be briefly summarized. Browne's extant notes form part of a larger collection of unpublished material that he left at his death in 1682.<sup>9</sup> The material amounts to thirty-four volumes; of these, eleven take the form of bound note-books while the rest are composite volumes of loose papers that were bound

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<sup>5</sup> See Sherman W., *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance* (Amherst, MA: 1995); Sharpe K., *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven, CT: 2000). The classic study remains Jardine L. – Grafton A., “Studied for Action: How Gabriel Harvey Read his *Livy*”, *Past and Present* 129 (1990) 30–78.

<sup>6</sup> For the practice of commonplacing, see in particular: Moss A., *Printed Commonplace Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (Oxford: 1996); Havens E., *Commonplace Books: A History of Manuscripts and Printed Books from Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: 2001).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, British Library Sloane MS 1906. Sloane MSS will hereafter be indicated by SL and their number.

<sup>8</sup> SL 1875, fol. 3r.

<sup>9</sup> For the manuscripts' history, see Beal P., *Index* 7–13.

together at unknown dates.<sup>10</sup> These extant notes clearly represent only a small proportion of what would have been created in the course of Browne's research for his major works; there are relatively few notes relating to *Pseudodoxia*, for example. With one exception, all the volumes are written in a late hand, a sign that Browne destroyed his note-books when they were of no further use to him. SL 1869 is fairly typical of the note-books' physical form. It is preserved as a quarto volume of 118 pages, with some extra leaves inserted. Pagination has been added at a later date, probably by the person responsible for the book's binding. The volume seems to have been formed out of two note-books, as the page preceding folio 58 is of a darker, thicker paper and shows signs of binding. The text is entirely in Browne's hand. Browne generally fills the recto pages, keeping the verso for additions. Sometimes, the notes are written in a rough hand or are heavily emended, suggesting that they are being noted for the first time. More often, however, the hand is fairly even, the tones of ink are uniform over several pages and textual corrections are few. Evidently, rather than jot down information as he encountered it, Browne tended to select for inclusion notes that he had already made. However, he did not avail himself of the opportunity that this re-copying offered to arrange his material systematically; the notes are neither classified nor indexed for easy retrieval. Browne tends to fill a few pages at a time with material that is broadly similar in theme, such as queries on natural history, or short verses, and often leaves a few blank pages between themes. In SL 1866, the notes from his reading are separated from the notes on natural history by being entered upside-down and from the back of the book. Neither especially systematic nor ostentatiously disordered, the note-books show a studied flexibility.

I turn now to the notes themselves. Sometimes, Browne's scope for re-working material is slight. SL 1866 contains the only example that I have discovered so far of notes that he made from a work of criticism. Separated from other entries by blank pages on either side, these comprise three pages of extracts from Kaspar Schoppe's *Infamia Famiani* (Amsterdam: 1658).<sup>11</sup> A fastidious critic of grammar, in this book Schoppe (Gasparus Scioppius, 1576–1649) attacks the style of

<sup>10</sup> The bound note-books are: Bodleian MS Rawl D 109; British Library SL 1843, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1866, 1869, 1875, 1879, 1882 and 1885.

<sup>11</sup> Browne owned the work. See Finch J.S. (ed.), *Catalogue of the Libraries of Sir Thomas Browne and Dr Edward Browne, His Son* (Leiden: 1986) 41.

an author famed for his mastery of Latin, the Roman Jesuit Famianus Strada (1572–1649). Schoppe works through the first section of Strada's *De Bello Belgico* (Rome: 1632), selecting phrases or sentences which he then analyses, identifying the grammatical “error” in each case and offering examples of “correct” usage by other classical authors. Running to 244 pages with italicized headings for each paragraph and a detailed index, the book was clearly designed to be read consultatively. Browne has nevertheless begun to work through it because his extracts (taken up to page 87) follow the order in which they appear. He has chosen some of Schoppe's disquisitions, which have no obvious feature in common apart from their brevity, and has copied the main point of the criticism.<sup>12</sup> Schoppe has, for example:

*Subcrescente morbo.* Increscente morbo, locupletes auctores habet [sic]. Succrescente est in locum alterius crescere. Livius: Adolescentes seniorum gloriae succrescunt, Cicero: Orator aliorum succrescens aetati. Plautus: Mali mores qs. irrigua herba succreverunt uberrime.<sup>13</sup>

Browne has ‘Subcrescente morbo. Succrescente est in locum alterius crescere.’ Perhaps the act of selection implies Browne's particular agreement with Schoppe's opinion on these points but he adds no comments of his own. In the case of a source where the authorial reaction constitutes the point, to react further would probably have seemed to him unnecessary. In addition, in contrast to his practice elsewhere, he does not include any heading or marginal note to indicate these notes' origin. Having selected what was useful to him, he presumably would have felt no need to consult the original again. Browne's aim here seems to be the simple one of paring reference material down, thus preserving the main point for his own use in the future.

When taking notes from literary works, however, Browne approaches his sources differently. About half of SL 1866 is made up of quotations from classical poets: Catullus (fols 67<sup>v</sup>–66<sup>v</sup>), Horace (59<sup>r</sup>–56<sup>v</sup>), Persius (55<sup>v</sup>–54<sup>r</sup>), Martial (53<sup>r</sup>–50<sup>v</sup>) and, a particular favourite, Juvenal (49<sup>v</sup>–31<sup>v</sup>). Browne tends to fill one or two pages with quotations from a single

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<sup>12</sup> SL 1866, fols 63<sup>v</sup>–62<sup>v</sup>. Browne takes his examples from pages 17, 20, 36, 39, 60, 74 and 87 of Schoppe.

<sup>13</sup> Schoppe, *Infamia* 39. ““Subcrescente morbo” [the illness advancing]. The best authors have “increscente morbo”. “Succrescente” is “to grow into the place of someone/something else”. Livy: Young men succeed to the glory of their elders. Cicero: The orator, reaching to the age of others. Plautus: Bad customs have grown up in the utmost profusion, like well-watered plants.”

poem or satire; the extracts range in length from a few words to a few lines. This kind of length respects the spirit of writers who aimed to make forceful points succinctly and who emphasized their works' variety; Juvenal described his own satire as a *farrago* (mixed cattle-food).<sup>14</sup> Here, each quotation is almost always followed by an explanatory sentence or two of Browne's own. The extracts do not always follow the order in which they appear in the original but, generally, Browne seems to have worked through the text, sometimes more than once. For example, the notes from Juvenal's Satire 3 (fol. 42) are followed by a further group of notes from the same satire, while the extracts from Satire 2 (fols 47<sup>v</sup> to 46<sup>r</sup>) show Browne working through the piece and then returning again to the beginning. As far as I can see, none of these notes appears in his published writings. In particular, there is no overlap between the many quotations from Juvenal that appear in *Pseudodoxia* and those that are recorded here. Clearly, Browne consulted his favourite works on many occasions, taking different notes from them each time.

Here, in the act of excerpting material, Browne begins to detach it from its original context. The practice was integral to the note-keeping tradition in which he had been trained. Humanist educators encouraged students to enter in their books any material that might be useful to them and, while certain authors were regularly recommended as sources in particular fields (Cicero for theories of government, Plutarch's *Moralia* for ethics), readers were expected to be resourceful in identifying the promising detail. Commonplace compilers mined the works of Horace, Persius and Juvenal not only for the moral lessons that these authors sought to teach but also for the incidental details of the ancient world that the works contained. The compiler of British Library MS Stowe 1015, for example, enters quotations from Juvenal both under moral heads ("avaritia", "ignominia", "mendax") and under factual ones ("pisces", "miles").<sup>15</sup> Here, Browne's aim seems to be to single out interesting forms of expression. As a result, the moral force of the original is submerged. In the satires, first-person statements and exclamations work to establish the authors' critical personae. Browne, however, avoids this kind of line in favour of scraps of description which contain surprising or startling images; he also picks out sententious phrases.

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<sup>14</sup> Satire 1.86.

<sup>15</sup> Stowe 1015, folios 20<sup>v</sup>, 35<sup>r</sup>, 41<sup>r</sup>, 110<sup>v</sup>, 139<sup>v</sup> and 152<sup>r</sup>.

The more savage or obscene invective that, in Juvenal particularly, is a strong feature, is only sparsely represented. In addition, while Browne sometimes quotes complete, forceful questions ('Quis enim non vicius abundat/What place is free from such vices?') (fol. 46<sup>v</sup>), more regularly, he quotes only parts of sentences. Divorced from their grammatical context, the words are often divorced from their meaning as well. The following are some examples from Juvenal (Juvenal's original lines, with the words selected by Browne shown in italic):

*Res memoranda novis annalibus atque recenti/Historia, speculum civilis sarcina belli* (fol. 46<sup>v</sup>)<sup>16</sup>

Nos Urbem colimus *tenui tibicine fultam* (fol. 43<sup>r</sup>)<sup>17</sup>

Ultimus ardebit *quem tegula sola tuctur a pluvia, molles ubi reddunt ova columbae* (fol 43<sup>r</sup>)<sup>18</sup>

Browne has omitted the very words which, in Juvenal, supply the sense. As a result, the moral points, about the effeminacy of soldiers, the physical and moral corruption of the city and the unexpected advantage that the servant has over the master, have been lost. In selecting his material, then, he has neutralized its effect. Taken from its old contexts, it stands ready to be absorbed into new ones.

Having gathered his quotations, Browne begins to interpret them. Again, his approach reflects a formation in which students were taught to read successively for grammatical sense, for meaning and, finally, for application to one's own literary or conversational production.<sup>19</sup> These notes combine the second and third stages of the process; Browne adds his own comments to elucidate narrow and broader meanings and, sometimes, to suggest possible applications. In the case of Persius, reputed for his compressed and difficult style, almost any line that Browne chooses will reward unpacking:

<sup>16</sup> 'It's a matter that deserves its mention in recent annals and modern history, that a mirror was part of the kit for civil warfare' (Satire 2,103–104). All translations are taken from the relevant Loeb editions.

<sup>17</sup> 'We inhabit a Rome for the most part supported by thin props' (Satire 3,193).

<sup>18</sup> 'The person protected from the rain by only a little roof tile – where the gentle doves produce their eggs – will be the last to burn.' (Satire 3,201–202).

<sup>19</sup> See Grafton A., "The Humanist as Reader" in Cavallo G. – Chartier R. (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. L.G. Cochrane (Cambridge: 1999) 179–210, here 196–199.

Ecce modo heroas sensus adferre videmus  
nugari solitos Graece nec ponere lucum  
artifices.<sup>20</sup>

Upon one that undertakes a serious poem much above his power or of no abillitie for lesser subiect. (fol. 55<sup>r</sup>)

In the case of Juvenal, whose style is a mixture of the direct and the compressed, Browne has already selected only the denser lines. In a practice that anticipates his choices in *Christian Morals*, he particularly favours metaphorical expressions that use proper nouns:

Non Maurus erat neque Sarmata nec Thrax<sup>21</sup>

It was no barbarous person that did this (fol. 44<sup>v</sup>)

Nulli gravis est pertusus Achilles  
aut multum quaeſitus Hylas<sup>22</sup>

men may say what they will and none will bee moved at men dead long  
agoe and things long past (fol. 48<sup>r</sup>)

He seeks not only to explain the meaning but also to express it in different ways:

Tu nube atque tace donant arcana cylindros<sup>23</sup>

Marry and hold thy peace. Suffer the iniquitie of thy husband. Bee silent  
bee rich. (fol. 46<sup>r</sup>)

exeat inquit  
si pudor est et de pulvino surgat equestri  
cuius res legi non sufficit<sup>24</sup>

let no man take a knights place whom the lawe doth not allowe no man  
take place above his qualitie (fol. 43<sup>v</sup>)

<sup>20</sup> ‘Look! We’re now teaching people who used to dabble in Greek doggerel to produce heroic sentiments, people not skilful enough to depict a grove.’ (Satire 1.69–70).

<sup>21</sup> ‘It wasn’t a Moroccan or a Sarmatian or a Thracian.’ (Satire 3.79).

<sup>22</sup> ‘No one’s offended by a perforated Achilles or by a Hylas much searched-for.’ (Satire 1.163–164).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Marry and keep quiet: secrets bestow jewels.’ (Satire 2.61).

<sup>24</sup> ‘If you have any standards’, says someone, ‘you will please stand up and leave the knight’s cushions, if your wealth does not satisfy the legal requirement.’ (Satire 3.153–155).

Only occasionally does he define an application narrowly. Squibs that could serve as inscriptions attract his attention:

Et mare percussum puero fabrumque volantem<sup>25</sup>  
Upon my large picture of Icarus and Daedalus (fol. 49<sup>r</sup>)

Unde epulum possis centum dare Pythagoreis<sup>26</sup>  
An inscription upon the kitchin garden doare (fol. 45<sup>r</sup>)

Browne's nineteenth-century editor, Simon Wilkin, grouped examples of this last kind of note under the heading, "Classical passages selected for mottoes"; conflating them, however, gives a misleading impression of their frequency.<sup>27</sup> Typically, Browne does not limit the use of his excerpts; instead, as the earlier examples show, he opens them up for a use that is not yet defined. From external evidence, we know that Browne engaged in long, pleasurable conversations with his neighbours John Knyvett and Philip Gawdie on Horace and Juvenal ('They never came butt they would have 2 or 3 howers discourse with me about them').<sup>28</sup> Here, by focussing on the act of explaining, he implicitly keeps a wider audience in view.

When Browne turns to prose writers, the wider benefit becomes clear. SL 1869 has been quarried by Browne's editors, probably because of the varied content and the notes' unusual legibility.<sup>29</sup> Here, extracts from others' writings occupy about a third of a volume that is remarkable for the activity recorded in its pages. Browne's entries on natural history show him observing, speculating and planning, as he records the results of experiments and makes memoranda for future ones: 'To make further enquiry'; 'To trie'; 'To observe'; 'To find out'. There are reflections on geographical themes, illustrated by quotations from Strabo (fols 64 and 75) and from the translator, historian and author of *The generall historie of the Turkes*, Richard Knolles (late 1540s–1610) (115). Aristotle's *Historia animalium* is quoted in Latin translation with Scaliger's commentary (36<sup>v</sup> and 39<sup>r</sup>). By far the largest number of

<sup>25</sup> 'And the sea hit by a boy and the flying workman.' (Satire 1.54).

<sup>26</sup> 'Which will enable you to offer a banquet to a hundred Pythagoreans.' (Satire 3.229).

<sup>27</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Wilkin, 4.454–456.

<sup>28</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.179 (Letter to Edward Browne, 12 January 1681).

<sup>29</sup> See Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 3.283–330; Browne, *Works* ed. S. Wilkin, 4.381–425.

quotations, however, are those from classical biographies. They fall into three clusters, folios 53<sup>v</sup> to 57<sup>r</sup>, folios 95<sup>r</sup> to 103<sup>r</sup> and folios 109<sup>r</sup> to 118<sup>r</sup>. Browne quotes from the *Lives* of Suetonius, from the *Res gestae* of Ammianus Marcellinus, from the *Historia Augusta* (then regarded as an authentic source) and, predominantly, from Plutarch's *Lives* in Thomas North's (1535–?1603) translation.<sup>30</sup> In these notes, he begins to shape material for himself and for his fellow enquirers.

In the first group of quotations, a civil purpose is apparent. Browne introduces the excerpts by a statement of intention that, in the context of a note-book, is unusually plain. He emphasizes the diversity of his material and those to whom it is offered:

Since these few considerations please you, for your farther discourse & consideration I would not omit to send you a larger list scatteringly observed out of good Authors, relating unto medicall enquirie, & whereof you may single out one daylie to discourse upon it, wch may bee a daylie recreation unto you & empl[o]y your evening howers where your affayres afford you the conversation of studious and learned friends. (fol. 51<sup>v</sup>)

The 'you' is presumably Edward. The paragraph has been scored through, a common sign in the note-books that Browne considered the content suitable for re-copying and therefore to be worth preserving. Here, he anticipates an audience who, like the 'knowing and leading part of learning' that he singles out in *Pseudodoxia*, will seek to advance knowledge through courteous and pleasurable discussion.<sup>31</sup> Several pages earlier, he has introduced notes on scripture and on historical events in a similarly self-conscious manner:

Several hints which may bee serviceable unto you & not ungratefull unto others I present you in this paper. They are not trite or vulgar, & very fewe of them anywhere to bee met with. I set them not downe in order, butt as memorie phancy or occasionall observation produced them whereof you may take the paynes to single out such as shall conduce unto your purpose. (fol. 12<sup>r</sup>)

In the environment of a note-book, such overt attentiveness towards the reception of material is unexpected. With a careful blend of modesty and confidence, Browne is beginning to present himself as the attentive interlocutor of his published writings.

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<sup>30</sup> Browne owned all of these. See Finch, *Catalogue* 28, 31 and 69. See also Browne's comments on North's translation in Browne T, *Works* ed. Keynes, 3.262.

<sup>31</sup> Browne T, *Pseudodoxia* 1.3.

The choice of quotation enhances the sense of civil debate. Part of the acknowledged pleasure of communal, scholarly discussion was to consider, afresh, information with which one was already familiar, and Browne selects details that, to an educated audience, were probably not completely new. The medical information usually refers to the biographical subjects themselves and, in several cases, to the event that would have been the best known, their manner of dying. Thus Browne notes the death of Vespasian (through a bowel complaint), of Julian (pierced by a javelin) and of Valentinianus (through apoplexy). He records efforts made by emperors to preserve their health: Antoninus Pius by eating dry bread; Augustus by applying sand and reeds to his lame leg. He sometimes redacts quotations to discard details that are not relevant to his medical theme. For example, Suetonius has:

Hic cum super urgentem valitudinem creberrimo frigidae aquae usu etiam intestina vitiasset nec eo minus muneribus imperatoriis ex consuetudine fungeretur, ut etiam legationes audiret cubans, alvo repente usque ad defectionem soluta, imperatorem ait stantem mori oportere; dumque consurgit ac nititur, inter manus sublevantium extinctus est VIII. Kal Iul.<sup>32</sup>

Browne has:

Cum super urgentem valetudinem creberrimo frigidae usu intestina vitiasset alvo repente usque ad defectionem soluta, inter manus sublevantium extinctus est. (fol. 52).<sup>33</sup>

To clarify the relevance to the discussion, he might add a brief comment ('An haec satis medice dicta').<sup>34</sup> Principally, however, as he stresses by describing the notes as 'scatteringly observed', the relevance is achieved in the very act of selection.

In his other quotations from classical biographies, Browne evokes a similar context of scholarly enquiry. Here, in the absence of an

<sup>32</sup> 'There, in addition to an increase in his illness, having contracted a bowel complaint by too free use of the cold waters, he nevertheless continued to perform his duties as emperor, even receiving embassies as he lay in his bed. Taken on a sudden with such an attack of diarrhoea that he all but swooned, he said, "An emperor ought to die standing", and while he was struggling to get on his feet, he died in the arms of those who tried to help him, on the ninth day before the Kalends of July.' *Vitae XII Caesorum*, VIII, c. 24 (Life of Vespasian).

<sup>33</sup> 'In addition to an increase in his illness, having contracted a bowel complaint by too free use of the cold [waters], taken on a sudden with an attack of diarrhoea, he died in the arms of those who tried to help him.'

<sup>34</sup> 'Whether these things were said medically enough'.

introductory paragraph, he annotates the excerpts to suggest the direction that such enquiry might take. Whether the investigation is to be undertaken by himself or by others, he leaves open. A passage from Plutarch's life of Agesilaus is typical of his general approach. North's translation, which Browne was consulting, reads:

As he went up into the councell house within the castell, there sodainly tooke him a greate crampe in his lefft legge, that swelled extreamly, and put him to great paine, men thinking that it was but bloud which had filled the vaine: a Phisitian of Syracusa in Sicile being there, straight opened a vaine under the ankle of his foote, which made the paine to cease: notwithstanding there came such abundance of blood, that they could not stanche it, so that he sounded oft, and was in great daunger of present death. In fine, a way was found to stop it, and they caried him to Lacedaemon, where he lay sicke a long time, so that he was past going to the warres any more. The Spartans in the meane time received great overthrowes both by sea and land [...]<sup>35</sup>

Browne has:

Agesilaus going up into the councell howse in the castle, there suddenly took him a great cramp in his lefft legge that swelled extremely & putt him to great payne, men thincking it had been butt blood wch filled the veyne, a physician being there opened a veyne under the anckle of his foote which made the payne to cease, butt there came such abundance of blood that they could not stanch it so that hee swounded often & was in danger of present death. In fine [they stanched it, *deleted*] a way was found to stop it & they caried him to Lacedaemon where hee lay sick a long time, so that hee was past going to the warres any more. Herin to consider the nature of the disease, the rationalitie of the cure, & by what way probably they stanched the bleeding. (fol. 96)

Two main practices are exhibited here. First, the extract shows Browne in the act of resituating his material. The new context is unusual. While scholars of the time were encouraged to use their sources imaginatively, Plutarch's *Lives* still tended to be used for their original purpose, that of exemplifying virtuous behaviour. Erasmus's (c. 1467–1536) examples of the requisite virtues for rulers are drawn from the *Lives* of Plutarch and Suetonius; Clarendon sifts through Plutarch when delineating the ideal qualities of a leader and when comparing past leaders with contemporary figures.<sup>36</sup> Remarkably, however, nowhere in his printed

<sup>35</sup> Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes*, trans. T. North (London: 1595) 665–666.

<sup>36</sup> Erasmus, “De Copia”, in *The Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational*

works nor, as far as I can see, in his note-books, does Browne use Plutarch as a source to illustrate virtuous action. In this note-book alone, he abstracts information from the *Lives* on medical matters, language practice, geography and natural history.<sup>37</sup> The difference between past and potential contexts can be extreme. For example, Plutarch presents as an example of deep loyalty Alexander's acceptance of medicine offered by his physician, the physician being under suspicion of treachery. North alerts the potential commonplace compiler to the incident's significance by means of a gloss – 'The wonderfull trust of Alexander in his physician' – but the point of interest for Browne is what the medicine contained.<sup>38</sup> Admittedly, the *Lives* of Plutarch and Suetonius are especially rich in such detail. In part this was rhetorical technique, namely the use of *enargeia* or vivid description to bring a scene to life. More importantly, however, the detail was selected to shed light on the subject's character. Browne's persistent focus on these nuggets is characteristic of his approach to information generally. Whether investigating nature, foreign customs or the writings of others, he habitually seeks out the kind of concise, interesting fact that is especially susceptible to being detached and transformed to new use.

Secondly, the North example shows Browne preferring not to recast the information in his own words but to copy from his source precisely. Such precision is perhaps unexpected in note-books whose content is not carefully arranged. Clearly, when taking notes from a work of grammatical criticism or when reading classical poets for their style, Browne needed to quote his sources exactly. When reading for facts, however, accuracy might not have seemed so important. Browne's choice here seems to have been guided by a wish to record the maximum amount of useful detail, in order thoroughly to exploit the informational content. Hence, 'they stanch'd it' is rejected in favour of North's original 'a way was found to stop it' so that Browne can then enquire which way it was. Recorded accurately, North's paragraph has yielded three medical topics for debate. Sometimes, Browne does record from memory;

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*Writings 2 De Copia/De Ratione Studii*, ed. C.R. Thompson (Toronto: 1974) 626. For Clarendon's use of Plutarch in his note-books, see Sharpe K., *Reading Revolutions* 301–304.

<sup>37</sup> For medical information, not Plutarch's *Lives* but the *Moralia* appears to have been popular among note-book compilers. The doctor Nicholas Bennett, for example, includes extracts from the *Moralia* alongside extracts from Gerard's *Herbal* and Croke's *Anatomy* in his commonplace book (1646) on medical subjects (SL 738 fols 111<sup>r</sup>–113<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>38</sup> Plutarch, *Lives* 727; SL 1869 fol. 109.

this is evident when he falls into error by doing so. ‘Hippotas pricked Cleomenes in the heele to see if he were yet alive; whether this were not a good way of trial on so sensible a part’ (fol. 53). In Plutarch’s detailed account of this incident, it is Panteus, not Hippotas, who pricks the heel.<sup>39</sup> More often, however, whether Browne transcribes his source in full or redacts it, he preserves the original words.

Consequently, Browne’s remarks in the “Naumachia”, a Latin work addressed apparently to his son Thomas (1647–?1667), are surprising. He writes:

Memory slips away, age, time, events pass mostly into oblivion; commentaries must therefore be made ready in good time to obviate so great an evil. Not to rearrange the thoughts of writers in commonplace books, which will be doing again what has already been done, but from a fresh reading of books to set down an abstract in free style, to include all that is difficult and worthy of note, whatever the author himself, the memory of like things, or natural genius supplies.<sup>40</sup>

Such abstracts from memory are in fact rarely encountered in Browne’s notes. Even where a quotation from one author prompts him to recall another, it is not his memory that he consults but another book. In SL 1869, for example, the extract from Plutarch’s life of Themistocles concerning a city held by the Athenians is followed by an extract from Sir Walter Ralegh (1554–1618) on the same subject, quoted word for word (fol. 101<sup>r</sup>).<sup>41</sup> The only example I have found where a complete work is briefly appraised is a paragraph in SL 1843 (fol. 24<sup>r</sup>) on Hendrik van Draakenstein’s *Hortus Indicus Malabaricus* (1678). Browne notes the book’s character and scope but he reserves his description for its title page, from which he quotes, and for its prefatory documents.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Plutarch, *Lives* 863.

<sup>40</sup> SL 1827 f. 65<sup>r</sup>. Printed in Browne, *Works* ed. Keynes, 3.158–159 (Keynes’s translation). Arno Löffler quotes the paragraph when arguing that Browne rejected traditional commonplacing practices completely. See “The Problem of *Memoria* and Virtuoso Sensibility in Sir Thomas Browne’s *The Garden of Cyrus*”, [http://webdoc.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic97/loeffler/1\\_97.html](http://webdoc.gwdg.de/edoc/ia/eese/artic97/loeffler/1_97.html) (Georg-August University of Göttingen, accessed 18 September 2007). In the light of Browne’s note-book quotations, however, the conclusion needs to be modified.

<sup>41</sup> Browne has: ‘herewithall hee mention’d a town in Italie belonging of old to the state of Italie, of wch town hee sayd an oracle had foretold. That the Athenians in processe of time should build it anewe & there, quoth hee, will wee plant ourselves, leaving unto you a sorrowful remembrance of my words’. Ralegh has the same except ‘Athens’ for the second ‘Italie’ (a slip in transcribing by Browne) but after ‘words’ adds ‘and of your owne unthankfulnessse’. *The History of the World* (London: 1614) 66.

<sup>42</sup> Printed in Browne, *Works* ed. Keynes, 3.275–276.

In *Pseudodoxia*, Browne tends to record the details from his “authorities” either in their own words or in those of their commentators or translators. In this context, accuracy assumes a moral importance, because careless transmission of the original might give rise to new errors.

Browne read his classical biographies, then, for the details that they contained, treating the texts not as complete entities but as repositories of discrete facts. It was an approach that, by the time he was writing, was becoming slightly old-fashioned, as the practice of taking connected notes on a whole book gradually became more popular. The anonymous author of a note-book of the 1650s fills twelve folio pages with closely-written “Annotations out of Plutarke”.<sup>43</sup> Working chronologically through North’s translation of the *Lives* up to page 786, the note-taker transcribes details of burial practices, of funeral rites, of military honours and of customs relating to women. There are occasional marginal notes but these, elucidating the moral points, are adapted from glosses supplied by North. In contrast to Browne, the annotator makes no personal observations or comments. A reader of a different kind of history, Browne’s own *Pseudodoxia*, takes a similar approach. Sir Edward Dering (1625–1684) attempts a summary of the book’s main topics, working through the book to produce several pages of notes in his journal. Signing off with ‘Finis’ and the date, he seems to have regarded reaching the end as important.<sup>44</sup> For these note-takers, the main concern is to record information without, at this point, giving any indication of its future application. Browne avoids this preliminary stage of recording by adapting the content at the same time as he enters the notes. Faced with another author’s *Pseudodoxia*, Browne would doubtless have selected individual facts and suggested new contexts for them. From the outset, he works to transform his material; in this regard, he follows the spirit although not the method that he recommends in the “Naumachia”.

Up to this point, I have stressed the future use of Browne’s gathered material. This was the emphasis of humanist educators, who taught their students to break up classical texts and to use the fragments to produce new meanings in new contexts. Past contexts, however, might assume more or less importance; Browne is usually careful not to obliterate them. He often takes pains to name the source of his

<sup>43</sup> BL MS Harl 6187 fols 1<sup>r</sup>–7<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> BL MS Add 22467 fols 5<sup>r</sup>–14<sup>v</sup>.

quotations and citations, even though the naming does not usually amount to full referencing. Those who gave guidance on compiling commonplace books generally had little to say on the form that a source reference should take; among compilers, practice seems to have varied considerably from those whose references include author, title, edition and page number to those who give no attribution at all. In SL 1866, Browne heads his quotations by a reference to both poet and poem: 'Horace, Epist 1', for example. He seems to have felt the need for a more systematic approach here than in the rest of the volume, because he numbers the pages and, when an entry is made in the wrong place, adds a note: 'to come in fol 8 satyr 2' (fol. 47<sup>v</sup>). In SL 1869, similarly, quotations are headed by their source reference: 'Aristot.lib.8 cap.22 de hist Animalium' (fol. 65<sup>r</sup>), 'Sr Walter Ralegh, lib 3, historie of the world' (fol. 101<sup>r</sup>). Where a quotation is embedded in Browne's own reflections, he often adds some kind of attribution on the verso page opposite the text: 'In his Politicks' (fol. 17<sup>v</sup>) opposite a reference to Aristotle; 'Tusculan Quest. libi' opposite a quotation from Cicero (fol. 84<sup>v</sup>). Browne's general keenness to note sources is shown by the fact that many are added to the notes on later occasions, sometimes where a source already exists ('[...] as Plutarch delivereth in the life of Titus Flamminius [...] *[added]* Plutarch in vita Titi Flamminii') (fol. 87<sup>r</sup>). What are the reasons for this practice?

In part, the references are made for Browne's own benefit, to enable him to refer to the source again if required. In contrast to the humanist emphasis on commonplace books as transformative, Browne's referencing serves to anchor the material, in some measure, to its source. His practice stands in contrast to a writer like Montaigne (1533–1592) who eschewed referencing, arguably to draw his abstracted material more closely into its new context.<sup>45</sup> René Descartes (1596–1650), more radically, rejected all citation in order to emphasize the innovative nature of his project. In Browne's collection of quotations addressed to Edward and his circle, he prominently places each reference as a heading ('Suet. in Vita Ne.'; 'Plut. In vita Cleomenes'). The chosen field of medical symptoms generates its own need for all known facts to be accurately presented; for this, the wider biographical context is helpful. In supplying

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<sup>45</sup> This is the conclusion of Terence Cave. See "Problems of Reading in the *Essais*" in McFarlane I.D. – Maclean I. (eds.), *Montaigne: Essays in Memory of Richard Sayce* (Oxford: 1982) 132–166, here 147–148.

the source reference, Browne seems to have intended that Edward and his companions should have been able to consult the original. Ideally, past and present contexts would be considered together. The energy that such an extended reading brings to the meaning is increased by the contrast in the kind of information that is combined: specific past case-studies and general current medical theories. The fact that these references were meant to be considered on separate, leisurely occasions suggests the degree of additional intellectual activity in which Browne might have envisaged Edward's circle engaging. The provision of a reference seems therefore to function in two ways. It enriches and animates the content and it encourages the reader's own activity, including Browne's when he reads over these quotations himself. In addition, the reference confers on the information an authority that Browne clearly considered desirable; this was a recognized function of source-referencing from medieval times.

I have begun, then, to explore the character of Browne's note-taking. These notes from his later years, at least, show an interesting balance of energy and judgment. In a context where one might have expected Browne simply to be recording material, he actively engages with it. Sensitive both to his sources and to how they might be applied, he takes notes from books in different ways. Thus, from a technical work, he redacts quotations without comment. From satires, through his choice of quotation and through his commentary, he opens up his excerpted material for future use. From classical biographies, he suggests new uses for the information-packed detail that he has selected, offering it up for collective enquiry. In addition, by quoting his sources precisely and by including source references, he fruitfully combines both potential applications and past ones. A survey of Browne's other note-books shows that future audiences are regularly either stated or implied; they range from the personal, the familial and the professional to fellow members of the "republic of letters". How Browne shaped other kinds of note for these recipients, such as the moral reflections that he re-copies in several versions, would be interesting to investigate.

Browne therefore moves beyond the humanist tradition that formed him. To some extent, he "read for action". For him, however, as the reported conversations with his neighbours on Juvenal suggest, action meant productive reflection. The loose arrangement of his material in the note-books supports this emphasis on exploration over results. A flexible structure does not imply imprecision; the notes can be very

detailed. But it does suggest a withdrawal from “goal-oriented” note-taking, as narrowly conceived. Of the notes that I have considered here, the most developed are those which Browne made from North’s translation of Plutarch’s *Lives*. When he extracts medical details from this work, his aim seems to have been to initiate or to add to the number of case-studies for scholarly examination. He does not seek to close the discussion down by digging out the irrefutable evidence in favour of a single point of view; rather, his goal in selecting the promising detail appears to be the altruistic, scholarly one of supplying material to allow the communal debate to continue. While Browne’s notes from his reading have a purpose, then, this is an open-ended one.

Viewed in this light, the note-books show the beginnings of a civil approach that, in Browne’s published writings, is well developed. Ann Moss has commented on the difficulty for the commonplace compiler in determining his or her own function: possessor, transmitter, imitator, processor, dissenter? She concludes that the role of possessor, implied in metaphors of commonplace books as treasure stores and private libraries, tended to dominate.<sup>46</sup> Admittedly, there are several places in the note-books where the motive simply to record or to store seems paramount. Browne copies several of his own verses and those sent to him by others, sometimes, as in the ‘anagrams sent me by [...] Sr Philip Wodehowse’, in more than one place. He notes down names of books he has read and he records local history observations. SL 1885 contains notes on Norwich Cathedral and SL 1866 details of the church steeple. While such material is recorded for an audience, namely, for future generations, it is not being drawn from one context in order to appear, reworked, in another. It resists transformation: Browne will pass down the information “as is”. More often, however, some future use of the notes is implied. In the daily environment, these can be satisfactorily definite ones: recipes and lists of seeds planted in the garden intimate successful meals and the correct identification of flowers. In the scholarly environment to which many of the notes relate, however, future applications are anticipated but not, usually, narrowly defined. I propose that Browne’s role here is predominantly that of contributor to knowledge. Of course, the role was a central one for humanist and humanist-influenced writers, as the prefaces to any collected material published for the wider benefit can testify. But Browne’s practice of

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<sup>46</sup> Moss A., *Commonplace Books* 258.

selecting material that will invigorate the wider debate but that suggests *at note-book stage* the explorations that can be made, whether by himself or by others, effects a shift of focus from the material offered on to the act of contributing. At their most refined, these notes show Browne beginning to mediate between his material and his like-minded audiences: the position of the civil enquirer.

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## DIVINATION IN *PSEUDODOXIA EPIDEMICA*: THOMAS BROWNE'S HABITS OF REVISION

Hugh Adlington

The number and types of divination or augury known to early modern savants such as Thomas Browne were as various as the creatures of the earth: from dowsing to hepatoscopy (divination by entrails), from rune casting to critomancy (divination by cakes), and from ornithomancy (construal of bird patterns) to tyromancy (divination by the coagulation of cheese).<sup>1</sup> Attitudes to such practices varied just as widely. While Francis Bacon (1561–1626), in his *Advancement of Learning* (1605), dismissed augury from natural phenomena as ‘for the most part [...] superstitious’, seventeenth-century Britons nevertheless continued casting lots, scrying clouds, and predicting the weather using pigs’ spleens.<sup>2</sup> Given the enduring fascination of such popular customs, it is no surprise that Thomas Browne should hold them up for scrutiny in Book V of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. Browne’s survey of augural practices reveals not only the quality of his scepticism regarding divination *per se*, it also sheds light on aspects of his method of inquiry more generally. In particular, small but significant revisions made by Browne to the section on divination in Book V of *Pseudodoxia* – traced through the evolution of the work’s six printed editions between 1646 and 1672 – reflect Browne’s responsiveness to a changing intellectual climate in mid-seventeenth-century Britain, and demonstrate his willingness to adapt his approach to popular practices such as divination accordingly.

As Robin Robbins has observed, the focus of modern scholarship on Browne’s works has shifted away from an earlier emphasis on prose

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<sup>1</sup> See Thorndike L., *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, 8 vols (New York: 1923–1958) 8.446–502. See also Burnett C., *Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages: Texts and Techniques in the Islamic and Christian Worlds* (Aldershot: 1996) *passim*; and Hanegraaff W.J. (ed.), *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (Leiden: 2006) 313–319.

<sup>2</sup> Bacon F., *The Twoo Booke of Francis Bacon. Of the proficience and aduancement of Learning, diuine and humane* (London: 1605) 2.45<sup>r</sup>; Thomas K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: 1971) 121–124, 231–244; Brand J., *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of Our Vulgar and Provincial Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions*, 3 vols (London: 1853–1855) 3.329–359.

style; instead, recent critical work has been particularly interested to debate the extent to which Browne might be classified as ‘creator of a persona, epistemologist, Baconian discoverer, and popularizer of the new learning’.<sup>3</sup> This essay seeks to contribute to this continuing debate by drawing attention to the emergent nature of Browne’s thought through the early editions of *Pseudodoxia* – the characteristics of which are revealed in a telling shift, between 1646 and 1672, in the vocabulary (if not the method) of Browne’s inquiries into the truth or falsity of enduring popular customs such as divination.

### 1. *Divination in the Works of Thomas Browne: Literary Context*

In 1826 William Hazlitt (1778–1830) reported that the two authors from the past whom Charles Lamb (1775–1834) would most like to have met were Thomas Browne and Fulke Greville (1554–1628). Hazlitt quotes Lamb’s justification for his choice: ‘their writings [Browne’s and Greville’s] are riddles, and they themselves the most mysterious of personages. They resemble the soothsayers of old, who dealt in dark hints and doubtful oracles’.<sup>4</sup> Lamb’s reported remarks are directed both at Browne’s self-declared willingness in *Religio Medici* (1642) to lose himself ‘in a mystery’, and more particularly at ‘that obscure but gorgeous prose-composition, the *Urn-burial*’.<sup>5</sup> But to what extent does Browne’s work consider the practice of divination and ‘doubtful oracles’ themselves?

Aside from Browne’s extended treatment of divination in Book V of *Pseudodoxia*, his writings contain three significant references to the subject. First, in a letter written on “A Prophecy Concerning the Future State

<sup>3</sup> Robbins R., “Browne, Sir Thomas (1605–1682)” in *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3702> (accessed 5 February 2008). The most significant recent work to consider *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* in the context of the development of early modern science is Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) esp. chs. 3 and 5. See also Robbins R., “Browne’s Cosmos Imagined: Nature, Man, and God in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*” in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne: The Ann Arbor Tercentenary Lectures and Essays* (Columbia, MO and London: 1982) 155–165; and Guibbory A., “Sir Thomas Browne’s *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* and the Circle of Knowledge”, *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 18,1 (1976) 486–499.

<sup>4</sup> Hazlitt W., “Of Persons One Would Wish to Have Seen”, in *Selected Essays of William Hazlitt*, ed. G. Keynes (London: 1934) 524. First printed in *New Monthly Magazine*, January 1826.

<sup>5</sup> Hazlitt W., “Of Persons” 525.

of Several Nations", Browne dismisses the peremptory, ambiguous, and contrived character of prophecy of future events by divination: 'I take no pleasure in Prophecies so hardly intelligible, and pointing at future things from a pretended spirit of Divination'. Browne's preference, he informs his correspondent, is for 'a very different kind of prediction [...] pointing at things not without all reason or probability of their events'.<sup>6</sup> Browne's evident disdain for divinations 'built upon fatal decrees', contrived solely to exploit the credulous, is further alluded to in his letter "Of the Answers of the Oracle of Apollo at Delphos to Croesus King of Lydia". Here Browne illustrates the threefold manner in which ancient oracles were understood in the sixth century B.C.:

Men looked upon ancient oracles as natural, artificial, demoniacal, or all. They conceived something natural of them, as being in places affording exhalations, which were found to operate upon the brains of persons unto raptures, strange utterances and divinations; which being observed and admired by the people, an advantage was taken thereof; an artificial contrivance made by subtle crafty persons confederating to carry on a practice of divination; pretending some power of divinity therein; but because they sometimes made very strange predictions, and above the power of human reason, men were inclined to believe some demoniacal co-operation, and that some evil spirit ruled the whole scene[.]<sup>7</sup>

Browne's sceptical commentary on divination participates in a lengthy tradition, echoing Roman writings by Cato the Elder (234–149 B.C.), Horace (65–8 B.C.) and Juvenal (fl. late-first and early-second century A.D.), each of which refutes fraudulent augural practice.<sup>8</sup> Browne's categorization of the 'natural' and 'artificial' aspects of oracles also reiterates a longstanding taxonomy, reaching back to Cicero's *De divinatione*, which itself appears to draw on the Stoic terminology of Posidonius's natural philosophy.<sup>9</sup> In Cicero's formulation, 'natural' or

<sup>6</sup> Browne T., "A Prophecy Concerning the Future State of Several Nations, in a Letter Written upon Occasion of an Old Prophecy Sent to the Authour from a Friend, with a Request that He would Consider It" in *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 4 vols (London: 1964) 3.103. The "Prophecy" was first published posthumously in *Certain Miscellany Tracts* (London: 1684).

<sup>7</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 3.95. "Of the Answers" was also first published in the *Miscellany Tracts*.

<sup>8</sup> Beard M. – North J. – Price S., *Religions of Rome*, 2 vols (Cambridge: 1998) 2.171–183; Scheid J., *An Introduction to Roman Religion*, trans. J. Lloyd (Bloomington, IN: 2003) 111–124.

<sup>9</sup> Cicero, *Cicero on Divination: De divinatione Book 1*, trans. D. Wardle (Cambridge: 2006) *passim*; Posidonius, eds. L. Edelstein – I.G. Kidd, 3 vols (London: 1972–1999) 1.106–109.

intuitive divination (*divinatio naturalis*) consists of the observation and interpretation of natural phenomena (such as birth monstrosities in man and animals, or the howling of dogs). ‘Artificial’, inductive, or reasoned divination (*divinatio artificiosa*) entails the observation and interpretation of man-made phenomena such as pouring oil into a basin of water to observe the formation of bubbles and rings. This twofold classification is encapsulated in Cicero’s concise description: ‘*Duo sunt enim diuinandi genera: quorum alterum artis est, alterum nature.*’<sup>10</sup> [‘There are two kinds of divination, the one involving a technique, the other involving nature.’]<sup>11</sup> For Cicero (106–43 B.C.), the revelation bestowed by the gods on men in a state of possession (*furor*) or in certain dreams also belongs to natural divination. Browne echoes Cicero’s nomenclature in his allusion to the ‘something natural’ of oracles, ‘which were found to operate upon the brains of persons unto raptures’. Browne’s categorization also concurs with that of Francis Bacon in the *Advancement of Learning*. In the class of ‘natural’ divination Bacon, like Cicero, includes the phenomenon of inspired prescience: ‘when the minde hath a presentation by an internall power, without the inducement of a signe’.<sup>12</sup>

Browne’s writing on divination, however, is distinguished from that of Cicero and Bacon by his Christian emphasis on the governing role of ‘some evil spirit’ in the deceptions practised by fraudulent divinators. In his assertion that pretence of divination gave rise to a suspicion of ‘demoniacal co-operation’ Browne more closely echoes the Calvinist condemnation of the occult meted out by William Perkins (1558–1602): ‘Diuination is a part of Witchcraft, whereby men reueale strange things, either past, present, or to come, by the assistance of the deuill’.<sup>13</sup> Pagan practice in Cicero thus becomes heretical witchcraft in Perkins and Browne. In Book I of *Pseudodoxia* Browne goes further, warning of the perils of error and sin that lie in the act of divinatory interpretation itself: when ‘we ascribe the effects of things unto evident and seeming causalities, which arise from the secret and undiscerned action of himself

<sup>10</sup> Cicero, *Opera*, 10 vols (London: 1642) 2.160. Browne may have read *De divinatione* in either of the two editions of Cicero’s *Works* listed in Finch J.F., *A Catalogue of the Libraries of Sir Thomas Browne and Dr Edward Browne, His Son* (Leiden: 1986) 28, 40. The catalogue includes *M. T. Ciceronis Opera*, 2 vols (1527) F°, and *M. T. Ciceronis Opera*, 10 vols (1642) 12°.

<sup>11</sup> Cicero, *On Divination* 49.

<sup>12</sup> Bacon F, *Aduancement* 2.45<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Perkins W., *A Discourse of the Damned Art of Witchcraft So Farre Forth as it is Revealed in the Scriptures, and Manifest by True Experience* (Cambridge: 1610) 56.

[Satan]'. Browne observes that such misattribution of causality in first-century B.C. Rome led to significantly mistaken conclusions:

Thus hath he [the Devil] deluded many Nations in his Auguriall and Extispicious inventions, from casuall and uncontrived contingencies divining events succeeding. Which Tuscan superstition first seasing upon Rome hath since possessed all Europe. When Augustus found two galls in his sacrifice, the credulity of the city concluded a hope of peace with Anthony, and the conjunction of persons in choler with each other. Because Brutus and Cassius met a Blackmore, and Pompey had on a darke or sad coloured garment at Pharsalia; these were presages of their overthrow, which notwithstanding are scarce Rhetoricall sequels, concluding metaphors from realities, and from conceptions metaphoricall inferring realities again.<sup>14</sup>

At first glance, the dubious inferential logic of divination depicted by Browne appears, unexpectedly, to resemble the two-way process of Bacon's anti-Aristotelian method of eliminative induction: reasoning from empirical phenomena to first principles, and then from first principles to empirical phenomena.<sup>15</sup> Apparent semantic similarities, however, are belied by the epistemological gulf between, on the one hand, the divinator's 'metaphors', and on the other, Bacon's 'first principles'. Browne's clear-sighted analysis and disapprobation of the divinator's interpretative method demonstrates his keen awareness of this epistemological distinction; more importantly, in the context of *Pseudodoxia*, it reveals Browne's crucial insight that such fallacious inference (leading merely to 'Rhetorical sequels') lay at the root of popular errors of superstition more generally. By contrast, almost all of Browne's immediate precursors in the business of surveying popular misconceptions fail to register the significance of divination to their larger purpose. Laurent Joubert (1529–1582), George Hakewill (1578–1649), Scipione Mercurio (1540–1615), and James Primerose (1600–1659) are all silent on the subject.<sup>16</sup> Nor is divination recognized as symptomatic of more fundamental errors of interpretation by Browne's contemporary or

<sup>14</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. R. Robbins (Oxford: 1981) 1.68. Chapter 11, "A further Illustration", extends the topic of the previous chapter, "Of the last and great promoter of false opinions, the endeavours of Satan".

<sup>15</sup> Gaukroger S., *Francis Bacon and the Transformation of Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: 2001) 138.

<sup>16</sup> Joubert L., *La Première et Seconde Partie des Erreurs Populaires Touchant la Medicine, et le Régime de Santé [...] Avec plusieurs autres petits traitez*, 2 vols (Rouen: 1600–1601); Hakewill G., *An Apologie or Declaration of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* (Oxford: 1627); Mercurio S., *De gli errori popolari d'Italia*, 2 vols (Padua: 1645); Primerose J., *De vulgi in medicina erroribus libri quatuor* (London: 1638).

later critics or admirers. None of Alexander Ross (1591–1654), John Robinson (*fl.* 1622–1658), Sir Hamon L'Estrange (1583–1654), nor Elias Friedrich Heister (1715–1740) touches on the topic.<sup>17</sup> Forty years on from the publication of the last edition of *Pseudodoxia*, Joseph Addison (1672–1719) reflected the prevailing attitude of metropolitan English culture in the lofty tone of his dismissal: ‘Among the many pretended Arts of Divination, there is none which so universally amuses as that by Dreams.’<sup>18</sup> By contrast, Thomas Browne’s treatment of divination in *Pseudodoxia*, while sceptical, is free from such condescension. Evidently, Browne considered the widespread persistence of belief in the ‘Arts of Divination’ in the mid-seventeenth century sufficient to warrant his closer attention. The following section, therefore, examines Browne’s exploration in Book V of *Pseudodoxia* of the nature of such popular belief in divination, and the motives and methods of its practitioners.

## 2. *Types of Divination in Pseudodoxia Epidemica: Browne’s Method of Inquiry*

Titled “Of some others”, Chapter 23 in Book V of Browne’s sixth edition of *Vulgar Errors* is a miscellaneous section on popular customs and belief that follows no main source.<sup>19</sup> In this chapter, Browne turns first to onychomancy or divination by fingernails, conceding that ‘temperamentall dignotions and conjecture of prevalent humours’ may be drawn from spots in the nails.<sup>20</sup> In this he corroborates remarks on nails as humoral barometers made in the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*, an edition of which appears in the catalogue of Browne’s library:<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ross A., *Arcana Microcosmi* (London: 1651); Robinson J., *Endoxa, or, Some probable Inquiries into Truth both Divine and Humane* (London: 1656 (Latin); 1658 (English)); L'Estrange H., “Observations on Ps. Ep.” (British Library MS Sloane 1839, fols. 50–91); Heister E.F., *Apologia pro medicis* (Amsterdam: 1736).

<sup>18</sup> Addison J., *The Spectator* 505 (9 October 1712) 3.

<sup>19</sup> The other twenty-two chapters of Book V consider ‘many things questionable as they are commonly described in Pictures’.

<sup>20</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia*, ed. R. Robbins, 1.434.

<sup>21</sup> Finch J., *Catalogue* 43. The catalogue lists *Aristotelis Problemata* (1632) 2° and also contains, in the section for 12° and 24° volumes, an older edition: *Aristotelis Problemata* (Paris: 1562).

Q. Why are men judged to be of good or evil complexion by the colour of their nails?

A. Because they give witness of the goodness or badness of the complexion; for, if they be somewhat red, they betoken choler well tempered: but, if they be inclined to red and somewhat to blackness, they betoken a sanguine complexion; but, if they be yellowish or black, they signify melancholy.<sup>22</sup>

However, while Browne is willing to allow that diagnoses of health may be made from such observations he is ‘not ready to admit sundry divinations, vulgarly raised upon them’.<sup>23</sup> His reservations in this regard are due in part to a lack of corroborative authority for Cardano’s claims for onychomancy.<sup>24</sup> Distinguishing the veracity of one authority from another (rejecting Tricassus and concurring with Picciolus),<sup>25</sup> Browne states further that he does not find ‘much considerable’ in the notion that spots in different parts of the nails correlate with different periods of human life: spots in the top signifying things past, in the middle things present, and at the bottom events to come.<sup>26</sup> This brief excursus on onychomancy not only reveals Browne’s professional circumspection as a physician, but also bears out Frank Huntley’s useful gloss on Browne’s threefold method of inquiry, via experience, reason and authority:

experience (senses) brings sharpened sensation to the inherited capacity to misapprehend things. Reason [...] corrects the second cause of error, the disposition we have to indulge in fallacious inference. Untrustworthy authority rather than sense or reason is the result of the third cause of error, credulity and supinity.<sup>27</sup>

Browne also treats palmistry, his second type of divination, to what George Saintsbury calls the ‘mild but potent acid of his peculiar scepticism’.<sup>28</sup> Browne observes drily of reading the lines on one’s hand that

<sup>22</sup> Aristotle, *The Problems of Aristotle, with Other Philosophers, and Physician. Wherein are contained Divers Questions, with their Answers, touching the Estate of Mans Bodie* (London: 1647) sig. C1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.434.

<sup>24</sup> Cardano G., *De varietate rerum* (Basel: 1557) 550–567.

<sup>25</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.434.

<sup>26</sup> Browne’s disavowal of onychomancy is reiterated in a 1679 letter to Edward Browne: ‘Chiromanticall observations concerning nayles are of little verity and slender use unto us’. (BL MS Sloane 1833 fol. 133<sup>r</sup>)

<sup>27</sup> Huntley F., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Ann Arbor, MI: 1962) 157.

<sup>28</sup> Saintsbury G., ‘Antiquaries: Sir Thomas Browne, Thomas Fuller, Izaak Walton, Sir Thomas Urquhart’, in Ward A.W. – Waller A.R. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, 14 vols (Cambridge: 1911) 7.232–258, here 238.

'if any thing be therein, it seems not confinable unto man'. Palmistry, Browne reasons, must also apply to other creatures, such as 'the forefoot of the Moll [mole], and especially that of the Monkey; wherein we have observed the table line, that of life, and of the liver'.<sup>29</sup> Browne is clearly unsympathetic to the claims of palmistry, yet guards against making a *parti pris* analysis; direct observation and reason – which combine to produce an *argumentum ad absurdum* – thus serve as the deft instruments of Browne's rhetorical discretion (and demolition).

The third type of divination Browne considers is dowsing with a forked hazel rod to discover sources of metal or water. In accord with the mineralogist Georgius Agricola (1494–1555),<sup>30</sup> Browne concludes that divining with rods is 'a fruitlesse exploration, strongly senting [sic] of Pagan derivation'. Browne goes on to add, however, that his agreement with Agricola remains provisional, at least 'untill better information' is forthcoming. Browne's caveat is significant in two respects. In a general sense it appears to signal his readiness to alter his views in the face of new empirical data; more particularly it adumbrates the Royal Society's repeated (if unsuccessful) trials in the 1660s to prove the efficacy of dowsing.<sup>31</sup> Experimental trials notwithstanding, however, Browne reiterates his suspicion that popular belief in customs such as dowsing is fuelled by poetic myth. In such wise, Browne remarks, authentic biblical accounts of the *virgula Divina*, such as those of Moses and Aaron, came to be 'proverbially magnified of old' by Homeric legends of magical rods, such as that of Circe in the *Odyssey*.<sup>32</sup> Browne thus concludes that biblical, divinely inspired examples of divining rods (Moses smiting the rock, the turning of Aaron's rod into a serpent, and its later budding forth) 'probably occasioned the fables of all the rest'.<sup>33</sup>

Lastly, with regard to bibliomancy – the oracular use of sacred texts – Browne offers what Claire Preston has called an 'establishing essay', providing historical background without passing judgement.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.436.

<sup>30</sup> Agricola G., *De re metallica* (Basel: 1621) 2.26–29.

<sup>31</sup> Birch T., *The History of the Royal Society of London for Improving of Natural Knowledge*, 4 vols (London: 1756) 1.234.

<sup>32</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.436. For further reference, see Thomas K., *Religion and the Decline of Magic* 235.

<sup>33</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.436. For Moses's smiting of the rock, see Numbers 20.11; for the turning of Aaron's rod into a serpent, Exodus 7.9–12; and for its budding forth, Numbers 17.6–8.

<sup>34</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne* 114.

Browne regards bibliomancy in the seventeenth century as the survival of ‘ancient fragments of Pagan divinations [...] an imitation of *sortes Homericæ*, or *Virgilianæ*’, and proffers historical examples of divinatory use of Virgil and the Bible.<sup>35</sup> As for rhabdomancy (divination by means of a rod or wand),<sup>36</sup> or belomancy (divination by the falling of a bundle of arrows), Browne finds the genesis of such customs in ‘Auguriall relique[s]’. He states unequivocally that ‘the practise thereof is accused by God himself’.<sup>37</sup> Once again, however, Browne is careful to distinguish between the superstitious use of belomancy by heathens such as Nebuchadnezzar on the one hand, and on the other, the divinely inspired employment of arrows for augury by biblical prophets such as Elisha.<sup>38</sup>

Browne’s refrain throughout his survey of the types of divination in *Pseudodoxia* (encompassing onychomancy, palmistry, dowsing, bibliomancy, rhabdomancy, and belomancy) is to note the ‘tenacity of ancient customes’.<sup>39</sup> He neither dismisses such popular traditions outright, nor is he simply credulous. Indeed, the ambivalence of Browne’s remarks on divination may in itself hold a valuable clue to the apparent equanimity or disinterestedness of Browne’s scepticism more broadly. As George Saintsbury pointed out a century ago:

Browne had mastered the fact – which the Alexander Rosses and even the Kenelm Digbys had not mastered – that, where a fact or an opinion previously adopted by a sufficiently *communis sensus* is open to trial by experiment, and experiment does not prove or justify it, you should give it up. But he had also mastered the fact [...] that, where such a fact or an opinion is *not* open to experiment, or where experiment has, as yet, been insufficiently applied, you are at liberty *not* to give it up, and to doubt the wisdom of those who do.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.436. Bibliomancy was also used to determine if a person was guilty of sorcery. The individual was weighed against the lectern bible in a church. If the person weighed less than the bible then he was considered not guilty.

<sup>36</sup> According to the *OED*, Browne’s *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646) contains the first attested usage of the word “rhabdomancy” in the English language.

<sup>37</sup> Hosea 4.12: ‘My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God’.

<sup>38</sup> Ezekiel 21.21–23, in which Nebuchadnezzar decides whether to march on Jerusalem by throwing up a bundle of arrows to see which way they fall; for Elisha, see 2 Kings 13.15–19.

<sup>39</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.437.

<sup>40</sup> Saintsbury G., “Antiquaries” 7.238–239. My italics.

Leonard Nathanson further demonstrates the tactical and dialectical value of Browne's even-handed approach by associating it with the broad philosophical tradition of Christian Platonism. For Nathanson, the epistemological latitude of Browne's inquiries in *Pseudodoxia, Religio Medici*, and elsewhere are reminiscent of Marsilio Ficino's humanist synthesis of faith and philosophy, which could be used to deflect incursion on two fronts. That is, on the one hand to rebuff, as with Richard Hooker (1554–1600), an anti-intellectual religious orthodoxy which dismissed the role of reason in religion; and on the other hand, as in the case of the Cambridge Platonists, to discount a materialist philosophy that dispensed with divine spirits in the world of nature.<sup>41</sup> Browne's method of inquiry into divination thus suggests an accommodating syncretism that may all too easily be occluded in epithets such as 'Baconian discoverer, the popularizer of the new learning'.

Other modern critics such as E.S. Merton also note Browne's concentrated interest in the means by which knowledge is won. *Pseudodoxia*, Merton observes, is more than a mere encyclopaedia of knowledge, for 'it is concerned throughout with an inquiry into the method for attaining truth'.<sup>42</sup> Claire Preston extends Merton's insight, suggesting that Browne's pursuit of truth is characterized by its probabilistic nature, which functions as 'the means of designation of what was worthy of credit'.<sup>43</sup> But to what extent can Browne's method of judicious probabilism be linked directly to the empirical, systematic methodology proposed by Francis Bacon in the *Advancement of Learning*, and to the development of early modern science more generally? Scholarly consensus on the question remains elusive. Early twentieth-century critics such as A.C. Howell and Alwin Thaler tended to trace a direct methodological lineage from Bacon to Browne,<sup>44</sup> citing Bacon's foundational proposal in *Advancement of Learning* for the compilation of

<sup>41</sup> Nathanson L., *The Strategy of Truth: A Study of Sir Thomas Browne* (Chicago: 1967) 46.

<sup>42</sup> Merton E.S., *Science and Imagination in Sir Thomas Browne* (New York: 1949) 157.

<sup>43</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne* 115.

<sup>44</sup> Howell A.C., "Sir Thomas Browne and Seventeenth Century Thought", unpublished Ph.D. dissertation (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill: 1924); Thaler A., "Sir Thomas Browne and the Elizabethans", *Studies in Philology* 28 (1931) 87–117.

a *Kalender of popular Errors*, I meane chiefly, in naturall Historie such as passe in speech and conceit, and are neuerthelesse apparently detected and convicted of vntruth, that Mans knowledge be not weakened nor imbased by such drosse and vanitie.<sup>45</sup>

In the second half of the last century, however, commentators such as E.S. Merton, Frank Huntley, and Joan Bennett preferred to emphasize Browne's participation in a general emergent tradition of experimental science, while remaining sceptical of direct Baconian influence.<sup>46</sup> Certainly, significant differences between the natural philosophical methods and aims of Browne and Bacon respectively are not hard to find. As Lytton Strachey (1880–1932) perceptively observes regarding method, 'Browne was scientific just up to the point where the examination of detail ends, and its co-ordination begins. He knew little or nothing of general laws; but his interest in isolated phenomena was intense.'<sup>47</sup> E.S. Merton also offers an important reminder of Browne's more overtly Christian aim in *Pseudodoxia* compared to that of Bacon in *Advancement of Learning*. Browne assumes, in a manner more clearly emphasized than in Bacon, that 'the principles natural study aims at are an intelligence which guides nature and not merely the laws of formed matter in motion'.<sup>48</sup> Achsah Guibbory, in her turn, takes Merton's view of Browne's epistemology to its logical conclusion, suggesting that far from furthering the project of the advancement of learning, *Pseudodoxia* 'actually teaches human fallibility and the impossibility of eliminating error', resulting in a transcendent reliance on God.<sup>49</sup> Without doubting the respective perspicacity of such apparently competing views, I would nonetheless argue that something has been omitted in these accounts of Browne's method of inquiry in *Pseudodoxia*. That something is the evolving nature of Browne's thought. More particularly, it is the shift in Browne's methodological emphasis over the course of the first six editions of *Vulgar Errors*, from 1646 to 1672. The concluding section of this essay thus aims to demonstrate this shift by examining textual

<sup>45</sup> Bacon F, *Advancement* 2.34.

<sup>46</sup> Merton E.S., *Science and Imagination* 156; Huntley F, *Thomas Browne* 86–87; Bennett J., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Man of Achievement in Literature* (Cambridge: 1962) 138, 211, 243–244.

<sup>47</sup> Strachey L., *Books & Characters French and English* (London: 1929) 35.

<sup>48</sup> Merton E.S., *Science and Imagination* 156.

<sup>49</sup> Guibbory A., "Circle of Knowledge" 493.

variants in Chapter 23 of Book V of *Pseudodoxia* in each of the six early printed editions.

### 3. Browne's Literary Divination: Habits of Revision

In approaching the question of Browne's additions, revisions and deletions regarding the topic of divination or augury, I wish to shift the focus from divinatory practice to what the *OED* refers to as the secondary or 'weaker sense' of divination, that is, 'guessing by happy instinct or unusual insight; successful conjecture'. Frank Kermode, in his thought-provoking essay on "Divination", defines this secondary meaning of *divinatio* as 'a power traditionally required by those who wish to distinguish between variant readings, and to purge corrupt texts'.<sup>50</sup> It is important to note that 'variant readings' here refer to *variae lectiones* in the bibliographic sense of conflicts in textual testimony (rather than 'variant readings' in the sense of differences of reception, of how various people read the same work). This shift in focus seeks to show how scrutiny of Browne's minute textual revisions in *Pseudodoxia* can add to our understanding of his intuitive, divinatory sense of the art of inquiry. By revealing something of Browne's habits of writing and revision, a fuller picture may emerge of his interpretative method; in his textual revisions to *Pseudodoxia* we see Browne altering the part in response to an altered conception of the whole, and vice versa.

The original manuscript of *Pseudodoxia* is not known to exist, but notes on some of the matters treated are to be found in Browne's commonplace books.<sup>51</sup> In the first edition of *Pseudodoxia* in 1646, Book V contains – amongst other matters such as "Of sitting crosse-leg'd" and "Of being drunk once a month" – passages on divining rods, rhabdomancy, and bibliomancy. Browne concludes his survey of miscellaneous superstitions in Book V by referring 'unto Christian considerations, what naturall effects can reasonably be expected' of other such popular customs. He also offers the modest hope that 'our adventures doe but sollicite [the] abler performances [of] our learned Selden and critcall Philologers'.<sup>52</sup> The methodological significance of the wording of such

<sup>50</sup> Kermode F, *An Appetite for Poetry: Essays in Literary Interpretation* (Glasgow: 1990) 152.

<sup>51</sup> Keynes G., *A Bibliography of Sir Thomas Browne*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: 1968) 51.

<sup>52</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica; or, Enquiries into very many received tenents, and commonly presumed truths* (London: 1646) 272.

apparently routine or commonplace phrases becomes clearer in the light of changes made in later editions.

Sections on onychomancy and palmistry were added to Book V in the second edition of 1650,<sup>53</sup> and there were further minor alterations and additions made to *Pseudodoxia* in the third, fourth and fifth editions of 1658, 1659, and 1669, yet the text of the final chapter of Book V remained substantially the same. The most significant change came in the sixth edition, of 1672, in which fresh material was introduced from Browne's commonplace books, such as: 'That to urine upon earth newly cast up by a Moll, bringeth down the menses in Women' and 'the first Rib of Roast Beef powderd is a peculiar remedy against the Fluxes'. Perhaps most significantly, however, in his final paragraph of V.23, Browne strikes out the phrase 'Christian considerations' (contained in all previous editions) and replaces it with 'sober examination'. Furthermore, the 'abler performances' of 'our learned Selden and critall Philologers' are changed in the sixth edition to the 'exacter performances' of our 'learned Philosophers and critical Philologers'.<sup>54</sup>

On the crucial switch from 'Christian considerations' to 'sober examination', Robbins observes that '[t]he change of criteria accords with the increasing rationalism of the period'.<sup>55</sup> This increasing rationalism found concrete expression in the Royal Society, which was founded in 1660 but many of whose members had been meeting regularly since 1645 to discuss experimental learning. I would also argue that Browne's switch of the 'abler' to the 'exacter' performances of philosophers and philologists in 1672 is of a piece with changes in the prevailing intellectual climate; that it reflects both an increased emphasis on empiricism in learned discourse *in toto*, as well as Browne's marked responsiveness to it *in parvo*. This development in Browne's methodological emphasis may be further witnessed in the case of an inserted passage in the third edition of *Pseudodoxia* in 1658. In a tribute to William Harvey (1578–1657), Browne reduces his 1646 threefold formula for the determination of

<sup>53</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into very many received tenents, and commonly presumed truths*, *The Second Edition* (London: 1650) 232.

<sup>54</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into very many received tenents, and commonly presumed truths*, *The Sixth and Last Edition* (London: 1672) 320. As Robbins has noted, the 1672 edition misprints 'Philosophers' for 'Philologists'. The deletion of 'Selden' in 1672 was a belated response to his death in 1654.

<sup>55</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 2.1014.

truth (via ‘Authority, Sense and Reason’)<sup>56</sup> to ‘the two great pillars of truth, experience and solid reason’.<sup>57</sup>

Evidence of Browne’s habits of revision can also be found in the two copies of *Pseudodoxia* so far discovered with autograph corrections. The most significant emendation for present purposes is contained in a copy of the 1672 edition in the Norwich City Library (now incorporated into the Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library), thought to have been presented by Browne. Here, in Browne’s hand, there is a correction of the sentence in Book V that reads: ‘that the first Rib of Roast Beef powderd is a peculiar remedy against the Fluxes’.<sup>58</sup> In his annotated copy, Browne corrects the word ‘first’ to read ‘fift’ in accordance with the draft of the sentence in his commonplace book.<sup>59</sup> In a technical sense Browne is merely correcting a printer’s error. In a larger sense, however, he is practising literary divination; for each correction that Browne undertook there were numerous others that he failed to amend. This haphazard method of correction is noted by Robbins when he writes that ‘there is [...] no thorough or consistent revision: Browne seems just to have lighted on passages that still interested him’.<sup>60</sup> This inconsistency of emendation is also evident elsewhere, in two copies of *Urne-Buriall (Hydriotaphia)* corrected and annotated by Browne. In one copy the printed word ‘neck’ is changed to ‘head’. In the second, the same word is altered again to ‘front’. As John Carter observes, ‘Where the Doctor disagrees with himself, who is to be judge?’<sup>61</sup>

In the revisions and annotations to *Pseudodoxia*, Browne is thus seen to be making intuitive changes as he labours through the parts in relation to his fluctuating conception of the whole. The metonymic and synecdochic movement of the author’s mind are on display, building

<sup>56</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* (1646) 115.

<sup>57</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into very many received tenents, and commonly presumed truths, The Third Edition* (London: 1658) 151.

<sup>58</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* (1672) 320.

<sup>59</sup> Norwich City Library Special Collection (within Norfolk and Norwich Millennium Library), A. e. 23; BL MS Sloane 1869 fol. 31<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.ix.

<sup>61</sup> Carter J., “Sir Thomas Browne’s Autograph Corrections,” *The Library*, Series 4,19 (1939) 492–493, here 493. John Whitefoot remarked that Browne’s writings were ‘often Transcribed, and Corrected by his own Hand, after the Fashion of Great and Curious Wits’ (*Posthumous Works of the learned Sir Thomas Browne, Kt [...] printed from his original manuscripts*, (London: 1712) xxxii, cited in Post J.F.S., *Sir Thomas Browne* (Boston, MA: 1987) 68.)

on his twofold foundation of experience and reason.<sup>62</sup> Or as Leonard Nathanson proposes, in his fallen state in the world man can best reconstruct the dismembered body of truth 'through laborious observation and study crowned by rare moments of intuition'.<sup>63</sup> As with literary divination, so with augury from natural phenomena, for in attempting to excavate the truth from obscurity both pursuits require disciplined labour (whether philological, hermeneutic, or simply the acquisition of a perfect knowledge of a particular subject) and the intuition that springs from that knowledge.<sup>64</sup> It is this 'disciplined intuition' – a sort of interpretative magic akin to that of foretelling the future from dropping stones into water or construing dreams – that lies, I would argue, at the heart of Browne's concept and method of natural philosophy. And in that sense, at least, it might be said that Browne and his commentators, early and late, inhabit common ground. While Browne investigates popular customs and corrects his own works, and his critics belatedly comb through those same texts, both parties appear, at times, to be no less engaged in divination than the ancient Etruscan haruspex searching for imperfections in the liver of the sacrificial lamb.

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<sup>62</sup> Robbins R., "Cosmos Imagined" 161. It must be noted, however, that reference to authority continued in the 1672 edition to play a hardly diminished part in Browne's deliberations.

<sup>63</sup> Nathanson L., *Strategy of Truth* 54–55.

<sup>64</sup> Kermode F., *Appetite for Poetry* 207.

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PART III  
FORM, MATTER, AND REFORM



## CURIOS READERS AND MEDITATIVE FORM IN THOMAS BROWNE'S *URNE-BURIALL*

Brent Nelson

Scholars and critics of *Urne-Buriall* (*Hydriotaphia*) have alternately admired its purple passages and scrutinized its ideas for evidence of Thomas Browne's place in the early modern 'wars of truth'.<sup>1</sup> Yet in his own time, *Urne-Buriall* seems to have been unappreciated on both fronts. While Browne's contemporaries did read him seriously and critically for his ideas in relation to the intellectual concerns of the time, his reputation was based principally on *Religio Medici* and *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. As to *Urne-Buriall*, it was 'practically unnoticed in his own day. Its magnificent prose-poem on death seemed irrelevant to a work that purported to discuss an archaeological discovery.'<sup>2</sup> If Alexander Ross (1591–1654), Browne's most notorious seventeenth-century critic, had taken notice of *Urne-Buriall*, either its style or its intellectual content, he might have found equal cause to say of it what he had said of *Religio Medici*'s handling of religion: that it contains 'too many *Tropicall pigments*, and *Rhetoricall dresses*' and fails 'the rigid test of reason'.<sup>3</sup> Implicit in Ross's literal-minded complaint is an assumption about the kind of language appropriate to such serious matter as Browne treats: a directly referential one. Browne exercises this kind of writing throughout his private papers (letters and notebooks) and in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, for

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<sup>1</sup> A number of essays in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne: The Ann Arbor Tercentenary Lectures and Essays* (Columbia, MO and London: 1982) mark a shift in interest from Browne's style to his epistemology, most notably L. Nathanson's "Sir Thomas Browne and the Ethics of Knowledge", which characterizes Browne as a double agent in the 'wars of truth' that marked the seventeenth-century (12–18, here 12).

<sup>2</sup> Pennel C., "The Learned Sir Thomas Browne: Some Seventeenth-Century Viewpoints", *Kansas Magazine* (1965), 82–86, here 84.

<sup>3</sup> Ross A., *Medicus Medicatus* (London: 1645), [A3v]–A4. Ross is quoting in order to refute Browne's apologia in his preface "To the Reader" where he asserts that 'many things' in *Religio Medici* are 'delivered Rhetorically' and not to be subjected 'unto the rigid test of reason': Browne T., *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) 1.10. All subsequent references will be cited parenthetically. Browne shares Ross's association of a rhetorical high style with a less logically rigid approach, but does not share Ross's dismissal of the intellectual validity of this style and approach.

example, but in his more contemplative works, such as *Religio Medici* and *Urne-Buriall*, he often consciously employs a dressed-up, high style of writing.<sup>4</sup> In this essay, I want to look beyond style to the rhetorical form of the text and the way in which it engenders and satisfies desire in an audience. More specifically I will suggest that *Urne-Buriall* functions as an occasional meditation whose operation is not principally logical or philosophical but rhetorical, not simply informing or even dazzling its audience,<sup>5</sup> but moving it through a cycle of experience from mortification to spiritual renewal.

## 1

Critics have tended to take epistemology as the subject of *Urne-Buriall*, rather than as a *topos* that serves a rhetorical-devotional purpose. Joan Bennett sees the discovery of the Walsingham urns as an opportunity for Browne to examine an intellectual problem, ‘to define the area of his scepticism and to declare his faith’, and William P. Dunn reads Browne’s depiction of their unearthing as an emblem of recovered knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Despite recognizing the meditative mode of *Urne-Buriall*, Leonard Nathanson similarly treats the text as essentially a ‘learned treatise’ dealing with the ‘problem of knowledge’<sup>7</sup> and as an intellectual-ethical exercise demonstrating the difference between *scientia* (knowledge) and *sapientia* (knowledge judiciously applied in the service of human values and well-being, i.e. wisdom).<sup>8</sup> C.A. Patrides points to its ‘admonitory role’, but offers no help in understanding how Browne’s odd convergence of the ludic and the solemn in his ‘unflagging amuse-

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<sup>4</sup> Austin Warren, in “The Style of Sir Thomas Browne”, *Kenyon Review* 13 (1951) 674–687, identifies at least three styles in Browne (high, middle, and low) which Browne uses as required by varying circumstances.

<sup>5</sup> This is Stanley Fish’s criticism of the ‘bad physician’ in *Religio Medici* who is more interested in rhetorical self-exposure than doing the hard rhetorical work of prescribing the spiritual cure that his audience needs: “The Bad Physician: The Case of Sir Thomas Browne” in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley, CA: 1972) 353–373. Fish’s critique is based on *Religio Medici*, and so this present essay cannot pretend to answer Fish, except to present *Urne-Buriall* as a clear counter-example of conscientious spiritual care.

<sup>6</sup> Bennett J., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Man of Achievement in Literature* (Cambridge: 1962) 191; Dunn W.P., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Study in Religious Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: 1950) 4.

<sup>7</sup> Nathanson L., *The Strategy of Truth: A Study of Sir Thomas Browne* (Chicago, IL: 1967) 177, 189.

<sup>8</sup> Nathanson L., “Ethics of Knowledge” 14.

ment at man's boundless capacity for folly' works rhetorically to this end.<sup>9</sup> James M. Cline finds a unifying artistic principle in Browne's paradoxical treatment of his ostensible subject (the urns), but again what Cline emphasizes is Browne's demonstration of faith's triumph over reason.<sup>10</sup> Intellectual concerns of epistemology and specifically the function of language are at the heart of this devotional-rhetorical mode, but these are *topoi*, not the primary subject of the work. The primary subject of the work is the reader, who is confronted with an occasion that seems to demand one kind of attention – an empirical assessment of an archaeological site – only to be frustrated by all attempts at so literal a reading of these objects. This frustration is the impulse that drives the reader to seek a more satisfactory reading in the anagogic possibilities of the occasion.

The dominant meditative model of the seventeenth century was the occasional meditation as set out by Joseph Hall (1574–1656) in *The Art of Divine Meditation* (1606).<sup>11</sup> Here meditation is defined as 'nothing else but a bending of the mind upon some spiritual object, through divers forms of discourse, until our thoughts come to an issue'; specifically, occasional meditations, in contradistinction to deliberate meditations, are 'extemporal and occasioned by outward occurrences offered to the mind'.<sup>12</sup> Beyond this, Hall prescribes no set paradigm or method for occasional meditation:

there may be much use, no role; forasmuch as our conceits herein vary according to the infinite multitude of objects and their divers manner of proffering themselves to the mind, as also for the suddenness of this act.<sup>13</sup>

This form of meditation develops spontaneously and variously out of found circumstances. Hall's specific directions on meditation, which occupy the rest of the treatise, were intended for application to deliberate

<sup>9</sup> Patrides C.A., “‘The Best Part of Nothing’: Sir Thomas Browne and the Strategy of Indirection” in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches* 31–48, here 35–36.

<sup>10</sup> Cline J.M., “*Urne-Buriall*”, *University of California Publications in English* 8 (1940) 73–100.

<sup>11</sup> Fisch H., “Bishop Hall's Meditations”, *Review of English Studies* 25 (1949) 210–221, here 211.

<sup>12</sup> Huntley F.L. (ed. and intro.), *Bishop Joseph Hall and Protestant Meditation in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study with Texts of the Art of Divine Meditation (1606) and Occasional Meditations (1633)* (Binghamton, NY: 1981) 72.

<sup>13</sup> Huntley F.L., *Joseph Hall* 72–73. Fisch elaborates the emblematic quality of Hall's occasional meditations, ‘start[ing] from some clear, visual image or situation which is then given a moral by pursuing its parallels and correspondences’, “Bishop Hall's Meditations” 214.

meditation, but can as easily be applied to the extemporal or occasional meditation: significantly, these methods draw on the devices of rhetorical invention (because the art of devotion is an art of persuasion), such as causes and effects, comparisons and similitudes.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Hall describes a two-part structure to the deliberate method that seems to apply equally to the occasional: 'It begins in the understanding, endeth in the affection; it begins in the brain, descends to the heart; begins on earth, ascends to heaven.'<sup>15</sup>

A similar two-part cognitive-affective operation can be seen at work in the apogee of the occasional method, John Donne's (1572–1631) *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, which arose from his extended illness in 1623. Although each of Donne's meditations, corresponding to a series of developments in his illness and convalescence, is divided into a three-part structure, these three parts operate according to a two-part form. Here I am using form (as distinct from structure) in Kenneth Burke's sense, as the movement of a text based on 'an arousing and fulfillment of desire'. He continues: 'A work has form in so far as one part of it leads a reader to anticipate another part, to be gratified by the sequence.' Specifically relevant here is what Burke describes as the 'Qualitative Progression' of form, wherein '[w]e are put into a state of mind which another state of mind can appropriately follow'.<sup>16</sup> In the case of Donne's *Devotions*, each emergent occasion detailed and analysed in the 'meditation' provokes agitation arising from an understanding of the situation and amplified in an 'expostulation'. This agitation functions as a preparative for an answer of assurance and comfort in a reliant 'prayer' to the providential deity.<sup>17</sup> While *Urne-Buriall* differs from Donne's *Devotions* in many respects, it employs a similar form, moving the reader from agitation and frustration at the start to contentment and satisfaction in the end, from mortification to edification. Throughout the first portion of his treatise Browne thematizes competing notions of reading, attempting first to 'read' funerary remains empirically and literally against the known history of funerary practice; however, this mode of reading fails to signify meaningfully, yielding up only silence

<sup>14</sup> Huntley F.L., *Joseph Hall* 88–100. See also see Huntley's introduction, 22–23.

<sup>15</sup> Huntley F.L., *Joseph Hall* 87.

<sup>16</sup> Burke K., *Counter-Statement* (Berkeley, CA: 1931) 124–125.

<sup>17</sup> See further my essay "Pathopoeia and the Protestant Form of Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*", in Papazian M.A. (ed.), *John Donne and the Protestant Reformation: New Perspectives* (Detroit, MI: 2003) 247–272.

and uncertainty. Toward the middle of the text Browne gravitates to a metaphoric-anagogic mode of reading that reinterprets the ‘text’ of these remains and finds them infused with spiritual meaning. But more than demonstrating the triumph of one mode of reading over another, *Urne-Buriall* rhetorically and experientially involves its audience in the act of reading, agitating and wearying the reader with vain attempts at deriving any meaning from these dead remains, thereby preparing them to seek relief by accepting the devotional alternative of faith and rest in the providence of God.<sup>18</sup>

## 2

Protestant meditation was explicitly tied to reading not only Scripture but also the natural world. In *Religio Medici* Browne himself explicitly acknowledges both kinds of reading: ‘there are two bookees from whence I collect my Divinity; besides that written one of God, another of his servant Nature, that universall and publik Manuscript, that lies expans’d unto the eyes of all’ and bearing the ‘mysticall letters’ and ‘Hieroglyphicks’ of God (1.24–25).<sup>19</sup> Meditative writers often acknowledged a third book of God: the human subject, usually conceived of as conscience or the soul.<sup>20</sup> In Hall, human experience and culture offer rich resources for occasional meditation, as in “Upon the Frame of a Globe Casually Broken” or “Upon the Sight of a Grave Dugged up”.<sup>21</sup> Browne proves equally adept in *Religio Medici* at reading himself, and humanity in general, as text, and given Browne’s notion of nature as God’s art, it is no stretch for Browne to read the human artefacts extracted from God’s repository in nature – in this case a field in Walsingham – as spiritual hieroglyphs.<sup>22</sup> The occasion itself would naturally invite “reading” in a similar sense. Paula Findlen argues that the philological achievement of the Renaissance emboldened naturalists to ‘[use] their humanist

<sup>18</sup> For analysis of similar rhetorical activity, but in the service of science, see Cunningham R., “Virtual Witnessing and the Role of the Reader in a New Natural Philosophy”, *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34 (2001) 207–224.

<sup>19</sup> See also Klinck D.R., “*Vestigia Trinitatis* in Man and his Works in the English Renaissance”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42 (1981) 13–27, here 27.

<sup>20</sup> Huntley F.L., *Joseph Hall* 9–11; Martz L.L., *The Paradise Within: Studies in Vaughan, Traherne, and Milton* (New Haven, CT: 1964) 17.

<sup>21</sup> Huntley F.L., *Joseph Hall* 126, 127.

<sup>22</sup> Huntley F.L., *Joseph Hall* 32–33.

training to decipher the language of nature [...] Careful perusal of ancient texts led philosophers to reread nature, the original Text.<sup>23</sup> While the critical methodology of the humanists was amenable to the empirical project of the new science, there was considerable tension on the issue of hermeneutics. On the one hand was the humanist inheritance of reading the world as infused by God with meaning and human significance; on the other, the new imperative in natural philosophy to treat things themselves (*res ipsae*). This new hermeneutic is at the heart of Francis Bacon's (1561–1626) *Novum Organum*, where 'all truer interpretation of nature is accomplished by means of instances, and apt and appropriate experiments, where the sense judges only the experiment while the experiment judges nature and the thing itself'.<sup>24</sup> Bacon's interpretation of nature begins by excluding the transcendental interests of religion from the concerns of science, 'giv[ing] to faith that which is faith's'.<sup>25</sup> Relegating all things divine to the realm of faith, Bacon can consider the material world empirically, to 'examine and, in a way, dissect the nature of the real world itself, [since] everything should be sought from the things themselves'.<sup>26</sup> This mode of reading the world looked for meaning only in the material qualities and causes of things.

In *Urne-Buriall* Browne exploits this tension, drawing on the energy of contemporary intellectual debate. In his critique of the idols of the theatre – those dogmatical philosophical systems that lead inquiry astray from diligent observation of things themselves – Bacon cites the schools of metaphysical speculation (the Pythagoreans and Platonists) as examples of the corrupting influence that 'Superstition and admixture of theology' have on learning, especially natural philosophy:

this [kind of knowledge], fantastical, swollen and almost poetical, deludes [the understanding]. For there is in man a kind of ambition of intellect no less than of will, especially in exceptionally gifted and exalted individuals.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Findlen P., *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, CA: 1994) 56. I am situating *Urne-Buriall* in the context of scientific empiricism, but another (and perhaps the primary) context is early modern antiquarianism, as described in Parry G., *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: 1995) 249–260.

<sup>24</sup> Bacon F., *The Instauratio magna Part II: Novum Organum and Associated Texts*, trans. and ed. G. Rees, with M. Wakeley (Oxford: 2004) 87.

<sup>25</sup> Bacon F., *Novum Organum* 103.

<sup>26</sup> Bacon F., "Plan of the Work" in *Novum Organum* 37. Cf. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Bacon F., *Novum Organum* 101–103.

Yet it is precisely because of this ‘ambition of intellect’ that Browne cannot be content with the mere fact of the urns. He instead associates himself with the Platonists, one of the groups Bacon cites as exemplifying an excess of ‘imagination’. In *Religio Medici* Browne confesses:

I am now content to understand a mystery without a rigid definition in an easie and Platonick description. That allegorical description of *Hermes*, pleaseth me beyond all the Metaphysicall definitions of Divines; where I cannot satisfie my reason, I love to humour my fancy. (1.19)

John R. Mulder explains Browne’s ‘rigid definitions’ as that tendency to define (“put an end to”) and determine (“limit”) meaning, which is in contrast to a mode of thought that involves secrets, mysteries, metaphors and allegories.<sup>28</sup> In this passage Browne is referring to scholastic metaphysics, but he applies the same distinction between a rigid and a metaphorical way of knowing in his reading of human obsequies.

A corollary to the empiricist hermeneutic was a new bias toward a plain, literal ideal of language. To proponents of the new science, nature communicates reliably, precisely, and accurately without any of the accommodations of human frailty that plague all language, even that of the Bible.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, Baconian reformers of language such as John Wilkins (1614–1672) and Thomas Sprat (1635–1713) denounced the rhetorical inclination of language for its ‘vicious abundance of *Phrase*, this trick of *Metaphors*, this volubility of *Tongue*, which makes so great a noise in the World’, promoting instead

a constant Resolution, to reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver’d so many *things*, almost in an equal number of *words*.

This, says Sprat, is the ‘natural way of speaking’ with ‘positive expressions; clear senses; a native easiness’ and with ‘Mathematical plainness’.<sup>30</sup> John Wilkins’s project for a universal language of precise correlation

<sup>28</sup> Mulder J.R., *The Temple of the Mind: Education and Literary Taste in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: 1969) 61.

<sup>29</sup> See de Grazia M., “The Secularization of Language in the Seventeenth Century”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41 (1980) 319–329, here 319, 323, 327. J.E. Force accepts de Grazia’s depiction of shifting ideas of language but refutes her characterization of this trend as ‘secularization’: “Secularization, the Language of God and the Royal Society at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century”, *History of European Ideas* 2 (1981) 221–235, esp. 223–224.

<sup>30</sup> Sprat T., *The History of the Royal-Society of London* (London: 1667) 112–113.

to things and ideas arose, in part, out of a concern regarding ‘the ambiguity of words by reason of *Metaphor* and *Phraseology*’.<sup>31</sup>

This close association of text and the material world was expressed by such collectors of rarities and curiosities as Filippo Bonanni (1658–1723), who ‘characterized the process of collecting shells as a form of reading’ which ‘accentuated the [early modern] desire to see nature as a text’.<sup>32</sup> For many collectors, the cabinet of curiosities was an attempt at direct referentiality. Robert Plot (1640–1696), for example, praised Elias Ashmole (1617–1692) for his donation to Oxford University of his collection comprised not of representational forms (prints or models) but of ‘the *real things themselves*'.<sup>33</sup> Browne’s text is a collection of sorts: not of *naturalia*, but rather *artificialia*, that were nonetheless extracted from the bowels of the earth.<sup>34</sup> In the opening pages of *Urne-Buriall* Browne explicitly evokes the object-world of early modern museums, deploying language that his contemporaries would recognize and associate with collections of rarities and curiosities, establishing a connection between ‘Urnies, Coynes, and Monuments’ and the seventeenth-century vogue for such collections: ‘Time’ is a cabinet of curiosities, implies Browne, that ‘hath endlesse rarities, and shows of all varieties’ (1.135). This is the same diction John Tradescant the younger (1608–1662) would use in describing his and his father’s collection of ‘Rarities and Curiosities’ as ‘more for variety than any one place known in Europe could afford’.<sup>35</sup>

This concurrence of collections with reading and writing is central to *Urne-Buriall*. The urns uncovered at Walsingham are imbued with

<sup>31</sup> Wilkins J., *An Essay Towards a Real Character, and a Philosophical Language* (London: 1668) § 17. On Wilkins’s project of a universal language see also Clauss S., ‘John Wilkins’ Essay Toward a Real Character: Its Place in the Seventeenth-Century Episteme’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43 (1982) 531–554. Although J.E. Halley argues that Jan Amos Comenius, Wilkins’s predecessor in the pursuit of a universal and directly referential language, saw no contradiction between the concrete idea and the abstract function of language, Wilkins clearly sought to limit its abstracting, transcending aspect. See ‘Sir Thomas Browne’s *The Garden of Cyrus* and the Real Character’, *English Literary Renaissance* 15 (1985) 100–121, here 108–112. This limiting approach, I am arguing, is inherent in Bacon’s deferral of transcendent truth in treating things themselves. See also Lewis R., *Language, Mind and Nature: Artificial Languages in England from Bacon to Locke* (Cambridge: 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Findlen P., *Possessing Nature* 56.

<sup>33</sup> Plot R., *The Natural History of Staffordshire* (Oxford: 1686) 277.

<sup>34</sup> On *Urne-Buriall* as the literary equivalent of a collection of curiosities see Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) 138–146 and ‘In the Wilderness of Forms: Ideas and Things in Thomas Browne’s Cabinet of Curiosities’ in Rhodes N. – Sawday J. (eds.), *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print* (London: 2000) 170–183, here 171, 179–180.

<sup>35</sup> Tradescant J., *Museum Tradescantianum* (London: 1656) sig. A8v.

language, representing a past generation's attempt to impress the pages of history with a legible representation of their lives. Memorials and remembrances of pious men are the 'sensible Rhetorick of the dead' (1.155) which exhorts men to a good life. Textuality is most apparent in the inscription of monuments, from Egyptian obelisks with their 'Heiroglyphicall figures' to ancient Christian tombs bearing 'hopefull draughts, and hinting imagery of the Resurrection' (1.151–152). Even mournful weeping takes on textual properties in 'the most lamented Monuments' where tears 'made one part of their Inscriptions' (1.149). Moreover, these rites and remembrances were offered with the expectation that they would meet with a receptive audience. Anxious that their message be read, the ancient Romans buried their dead 'by high-wayes, whereby their Monuments were under eye' and could be readily received as '*memento's* [sic] of mortality unto living passengers' (1.155). Though Browne is a willing respondent to these communications from the past, his concern in *Urne-Buriall* is not so much the monuments themselves but how these monuments are read, and ultimately how this reading affects the reader.

## 3

Browne begins his discussion of the urns with facts, both historical and physical, but his treatment of them sends mixed signals. While a factual interpretation offers hope of an assured account of the urns' origins, Browne's language subverts this assurance at every turn. The opening chapter proceeds at a rapid pace, introducing the principal methods of obsequies, the cultures which practised each, and their reasons for preferring one method over the other. He begins analytically and inventively (in the rhetorical sense) with a fourfold division of funerary practices according to the elements of earth, fire, water, and air:

Some being of the opinion of *Thales*, that water was the originall of all things, thought it most equall to [...] conclude in a moist relentment. Others conceived it most natural to end in fire, as due unto the master principle in the composition. (1.137)

The Scythians, who associated wind with life, 'made their graves in the ayr', while Christians preferred interment so that their bodies might 'return not unto ashes but unto dust againe' (1.138). Browne elaborates his material in keeping with a scientific (in a pre-disciplinary sense) interest, corresponding each practice with a cause in the material

world. He augments this reasoned analysis with a terse but impressively encyclopaedic representation of the facts of funerary history, giving the reader a sense of the author's erudition and a feeling of confidence that the material facts of the past can and will be meaningfully read. But this assurance is soon shaken as Browne turns to the urns themselves.

In the second chapter, Browne employs available history to interpret the material remains exhumed from the Walsingham site, but his reading is plagued by doubt and dissonance. He begins with the bare facts: the location and configuration of the urns as well as their contents, dissected and analysed. He then offers his hypothesis: 'That these were the Urnes of *Romanes* from the common custome and place where they were found, is no obscure conjecture' (1.141). From the outset Browne's syntax taints his argument with doubt. This last phrase, 'no obscure conjecture', is a conspicuous deployment of litotes. The same syntax of negation occurs throughout his subsequent argument for an early Roman possession of Britain, but especially in the first two paragraphs of his proof: 'no obscure conjecture'; 'no very different sound'; 'not improbable' (twice); and 'nor is it improbable' (1.140–141). Though the semantic value of these phrases is positive, their syntax allows obscurity, conjecture, and improbability to be expressed at every turn. Browne's persistent use of negation indicates that the uncertainty of the facts is very much on his mind. As a consequence, even as he frequently denies uncertainty, his indirection sows seeds of doubt in his evidence. Despite moments of assurance, uncertainty continues as Browne surveys the coins – Roman and otherwise – that have been unearthed throughout Britain, in an attempt to determine when a significant occupation began: found '*Brittish Coynes afford conjecture of early habitation*', while the provenance and significance of other coins he leaves 'to higher conjecture' (1.142). Consequently, regarding the 'precise Antiquity of these Reliques', Browne finds '*nothing* of more *uncertainty*' (1.143; emphases added). His best guess based on the coins found throughout the region places the urns in the first century A.D.; however, they '*might* be of later date' though '*not likely* of higher Antiquity' (emphases added). The presence of a coin in the emperor's face which marked it; unfortunately, Browne finds 'great obscurity herein, because no medall or Emperours Coyne [was] enclosed, which might denote the date of their enterrments' (1.143).

Browne then proceeds to an argument based on the cessation of the practice of burning among the Romans. Although there is '[s]ome

uncertainty' regarding the date, he fixes it sometime shortly after the cremation of Septimus Severus (in 211 C.E.). But then his argument must proceed provisionally: 'if we so fix this period or cessation,' says Browne, 'these Urnes will challenge above thirteen hundred years'. The assertion is barely out before he undoes it with a 'but' expressing uncertainty whether the practice even extended beyond Rome to the provinces. On this point, Browne admits, 'we hold no authentick account' (1.144). Following a brief survey of the practice among the early European nations, the Danish in particular, Browne similarly concludes, 'What time this custome generally expired in that Nation, we discern no assured period' and 'no assured conclusion' (1.146). And again he proceeds on shaky ground, siding with tradition and conjecture to accept that this practice had ceased among the Danes before their invasion. So, then, 'the most assured account' falls upon the Romans, as it were by default. Again a brief assertion is subverted by contrary evidence signalled by the 'However' at the beginning of the next paragraph (1.147). Here Browne concedes that similar urns conformable to some remains located in Britain have been found in other European countries, evidence which contravenes the objection he just raised against a northern European origin for the urns. Furthermore, while the urns themselves offer inconclusive evidence, their contents suggest a possible British, Saxon, or Danish origin. Though Browne rejects the Danes, albeit on dubious grounds, the Saxons and the British cannot be ruled out because, as Browne laments, history remains silent regarding their burial practices.

Much of the uncertainty in Browne's reading of the material evidence of the urns is owing to a fragmentary historical record. Browne draws attention to this lack by his frequent repetition of words and phrases connoting silence. Regarding the Saxon population of the old East-Angle monarchy, 'tradition and history are silent' (1.143). On the burial customs of the ancient Britons, '*Cæsar*, *Tacitus*, and *Strabo* are [all] silent' (1.145). As to whether the Britons were accustomed to Roman life and manners at all, 'we have not historicall assertion or deniall'; the historical record is similarly 'bare in [...] particulars' regarding the obsequies of the Saxons, Jutes, and Angles (1.146). The second chapter in fact concludes in silence as Browne laments that the mystery of another site 'remains yet undiscovered' (1.147). As a material record of history, the urns are similarly silent. In the prefatory letter Browne wishes that these urns could resonate like the theatrical Hippodrome urns in Rome; however, 'these are sad and sepulchral Pitchers, which

have no joyful voices; silently expressing old mortality, the ruines of forgotten times' (1.131). Instead of revealing something of the lives of the people whom they represent, the de-humanized urns speak only of the fact of their death. By the third chapter, all that has been learned is that some of the deceased were children and some were of relatively high social status. The ashes themselves are significant not for what they reveal but for what they do not. Browne laments that, in contrast to the skeletal remains of interment from which various physical attributes can be deduced, urnal fragments 'leave us ignorant of most personall discoveries' (1.156). Bereft of all traces of the lives they once contained, these silent ashes symbolize the fragility of corporeal existence and its ready erasure from the pages of history.

Read in this way, the silence of the urns and their relative emptiness speak only of an absence of meaning. The futility of any attempt to read these urns empirically points to the failure of the funerary "text" that relies entirely on a literal, material presence: all that remains of the dead are empty ciphers. To Browne the urns testify to a past generation's materialism which displaced spiritual concerns and values with its undue attention to corporeal continuance. He finds that these are '[v]ain ashes, which in the oblivion of names, persons, times, and sexes, have found unto themselves a fruitlesse continuation, and only arise unto late posterity, as Emblemes of mortall vanities'. Though the ashes achieve remarkable duration, they nonetheless fail in the 'art of perpetuation' (1.165). Similarly, the ornamentation on the Walsingham urns is all but obliterated by the process of time. Even the Egyptians, who epitomize the art of perpetuation, fail to achieve any meaningful preservation. As Browne concludes, 'to subsist in bones, and be but Pyramidally extant, is a fallacy in duration' (1.165). In fact, a successful material subsistence actually jeopardizes the remembrance of the deceased. Those mummies which are extant 'avarice now consumeth. Mummie is become Merchandise, *Miszraim* cures wounds, and *Pharaoh* is sold for balsoms' (1.168). Apothecaries and collectors (sometimes one and the same) deal in depersonalized matter.<sup>36</sup> No longer valued as remembrances, these mummies are often given new names by their collectors, thereby erasing their identities (1.167). In the end the Egyp-

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<sup>36</sup> In a letter circa 9 June 1664, Edward Browne writes to his father about an apothecary's collection of rarities in Paris: *Sir Thomas Browne's Works*, ed. S. Wilkin, 4 vols (London: 1836) 1.64. Mummies were common in collections of curiosities.

tians' practice robs the dead of their dignity as they are valued as commodities and curiosities to be bought and sold rather than remembered as formerly living people. Browne uses similar mercantile imagery in speaking of the 'vulgar discoverer[s]' and profiteering 'miners' who plunder graves 'in hope of inclosed treasure' (1.152). Browne is being at least somewhat ironic as he gives some very reasonable defences for this practice and so aligns his voice with that of 'the most barbarous Expilators [who] found the most civil Rhetorick' to justify their actions. Despite Browne's indirection, his point is clear: the materialism of the pharaohs has fuelled the greed of their pillagers and ironically ensured their consumption as commodities on the collector's market.

Notwithstanding Browne's irony, his defence of pillage expresses an attitude not unlike that of his empirical, factual reading of the urns. From the outset Browne's approach to the urns is associated with materialistic activities akin to those of grave-robbers. Browne's opening paragraph relates scientific inquiry to the profit-seeking activities of exploration and discovery. The earth holds for the enquiring mind a wealth of treasure waiting to be uncovered. The bounty of the newly-found Americas reminds Browne that 'a large part of the earth is still in the Urne unto us', buried and waiting to be exhumed (1.135). He compares the wealth of such discovery to the 'bowels of *Potosí*', the silver-rich mountain of Peru. 'Who', Browne asks, 'if two or three yards were open about the surface, would not care to rake' the resources of these potential mines. Then he draws a parallel: like nature, mankind has left a deposit of 'Urnes, Coynes, and Monuments' that are just as accessible, lying 'scarce below the roots of some vegetables'. Explorers and empiricists both derive meaning and value from the material qualities of their find: the former seek silver for its exchange value; the latter value artefacts for the information they provide.

Thus far, Browne's reading of the urns looks like a moral meditation, demonstrating the poverty of a literal-minded, empirical reading that mimics the failure of a materialist approach to perpetuity. Browne's thrust here is, as Claire Preston puts it, the 'amplification of loss' and an emphasis on oblivion;<sup>37</sup> at the same time, however, Browne's treatment of these items as collectable curiosities serves deliberately to arouse desire in the form of curiosity, only to frustrate it. This frustration serves the second aspect of the meditation, a redirection of the affections toward

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<sup>37</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne* 132.

spiritual satisfaction in God. This is not just a moral meditation on the errors of materialism, nor a caution against the futility of empiricism or the practices of collectors; rather, it is a devotional meditation that redirects frustrated desire toward its proper end in God.

In Browne's initial treatment of these urns, value is placed in the objective quality of things: their rarity, oddity, orateness, or opulence. Browne creates a sensory-rich, almost virtual experience of encounter with the world of funerary objects that is calculated to arouse interest in their materiality. In many ways the first half of *Urne-Buriall* resembles a collection of curiosities, where Browne evinces a 'relish' not only 'for the oddity of human beliefs' as he enumerates various funerary rites of the past, but also for the objects that represent these beliefs and practices.<sup>38</sup> He delights particularly in things that are peculiar, such as Pyrrhus's toe which refused to burn, liquors dating from antiquity which retain what Browne calls their 'Vinosity', or '[b]ay-leaves [...] found green in the Tomb of *S. Humbert*, after an hundred and fifty years' (1.149). The urns themselves resemble cabinets of curiosities containing:

substances resembling Combes, Plates like Boxes [which turn out to be ivory], fastened with Iron pins, and handsomely overwrought like the necks or Bridges of Musicall Instruments, long brass plates overwrought like the handles of neat implements, brazen nippers to pull away hair, and in one a kinde of *Opale* yet maintaining a bleuish colour (1.144).

These items are all likely candidates for collection. Even the comparisons Browne introduces – musical instruments, the handles of 'neat' implements – associate the contents of the urns with the contents of other discoveries and other collections. They represent both what was found and what Browne might have expected or wished to find.

It seems, however, that not all of Browne's hopes and expectations were realized. He betrays disappointment in the urns as he again shows as much interest in what is absent as in what is present. In addition to coins, he regrets that '[n]o Lamps, included Liquors, Lachrymatories, or Tear-bottles attended these rurall Urnes' (1.149). Given his assumption that the urns were Roman, Browne might have reason to anticipate such items (some of the Tradescants' collection evidently came from Roman burial sites, including two urns, a lamp, and a lachrymatory): as a result, the urns are hardly more satisfying as curiosities than they are as data.<sup>39</sup> Browne therefore feels compelled to supplement the urns

<sup>38</sup> Bennett J., *Thomas Browne* 191.

<sup>39</sup> Tradescant J., *Museum Tradescantianum* 44, 52, 48.

with other discovered ossuaries to satisfy his (and his audience's) curiosity. Toward this end, he provides an inventory of

that *Romane Urne* preserved by Cardinall *Farnese*, wherein besides great number of Gemmes with heads of Gods and Goddesses, were found an Ape of *Agath*, a Grashopper, an Elephant of Ambre, a Crystall Ball, three glasses, two Spoones, and six Nuts of Crystall.

A similar treasure was found in the monument of Childerick the First, consisting of 'much gold richly adorning his Sword, two hundred Rubies, many hundred Imperial Coyns, three hundred golden Bees, the bones and horseshoe of his horse enterred with him' (1.145). Again, all these are typical collectibles that were perhaps more in keeping with Browne's and his reader's expectations than were the comparatively disappointing contents of the Walsingham urns. Here we feel the force of the eloquent "I" inviting the reader to share a vividly rendered experience. But these urns arouse a curiosity that they cannot satisfy. This frustrated desire and disappointment are answered by a new emphasis in the second half of *Urne-Buriall*.

In the first half, Browne is careful to keep the Christian perspective at bay. In the latter half, however, his discussion of funerary practices becomes a meditative consolation on the hope of Christian resurrection and its symbolic representations. Here desire for meaning in the urns is satisfied. If the first three chapters frustrate the reader with analysis concerned with discrete facts and artefacts, the final two chapters take the reader below the surface into the deeper, metaphoric sense of things in synthesis. Whereas in chapter three the bay leaves in St. Humbert's tomb are considered among the curiosities of physical duration, in chapter four the bay tree becomes one of the Christians' 'silent expressions of their surviving hopes' (1.159). What might otherwise be passed as a mere scientific fact of observation – namely that 'that tree seeming dead, will restore it self from the root, and its dry and exucus leaves resume their verdure again' – is now read metaphorically as 'an Embleme of Resurrection' (1.159). Similarly, the urns, which to this point have been considered as things themselves expressing only mortality and emptiness, are now associated with a series of metaphors which imply life beyond death, making them emblems of eternity. These images bear a remarkable similitude, each signifying a container emptied of its contents: the ashes of the attenuable parts, the body of the soul, the house of its resident. For Browne, the most striking likeness is found in the womb-like shape of the urns, 'making our last bed like our first' (1.148). The urn and the womb are both entrances into

new stages of existence. Furthermore, we enter the next life as blindly as we entered this one. Browne suggests that a ‘Dialogue between two Infants in the womb concerning the state of this world, might handsomely illustrate our ignorance of the next’: in our speculating about death we are ‘but *Embryon Philosophers*’ who ‘yet discourse in *Platoes* denne’ (1.162). Browne is not suggesting merely that we are ignorant of the world beyond, but that we limit understanding by fixating on the shadows and images of this world – artefacts and specimens – which are only signifiers of a truth beyond the surface of things. In the urn-womb emblem, this higher meaning is the reborn soul which has entered eternity, leaving behind the empty urn and ashes which are its shadowy representations.

The ashes themselves are an apt emblem of the ascending soul, ‘the superiour ingredient and obscured part of our selves’ (1.164). The womb without the foetus, the ashes without the attenuable parts, and the body without the soul all represent both death and an absence of meaning. Browne recognizes the same significance in the similarity between the urns with their ‘thin walls of clay’ and ‘the strong and specious buildings’ above them (1.164). Though the principal point of comparison is between their relative durability (favouring the urns over the buildings), he makes a concomitant point about their similar specious natures: their walls present a superficial semblance of beauty and fullness which hides the fact that in and of themselves, they are empty. As containers, they derive their meaning from their contents. The temporality of corporeal existence is also figured in the womb which holds a child for only nine months before giving it up. Browne supplies a similar image in his passing mention of emptied eggshell. Along with the bay leaves of St. Humbert’s tomb and other such curiosities, he includes the discovery of some well-preserved eggshells: ‘In a long deserted habitation, even Egge-shels have been found fresh, not tending to corruption’ (1.150). Eggs were common in seventeenth-century collections, including both Browne’s and the Tradescants’, and the longevity of these eggshells gives them an added interest. Though they are found among habitations of the living, albeit ‘long deserted habitations’, they are appropriately included among the relics of the dead. Read literally these shells, like the urns and their ashes, represent a respectable achievement in duration, but their longevity is nonetheless a longevity in death, making it ‘a fruitlesse continuation’ (1.165). Just as the urn’s ‘Vain ashes’ are empty of human associations – ‘names, persons, times, and sexes’ – so too the broken egg is bereaved of its embryo, that part which connotes life. As

scientific curiosities, the eggshells represent the biological fact of death (mortification), but another meaning (regeneration) is implied in their likeness to Browne's other images of various containers. The emptiness of the egg also strongly implies a continuation of life. In Christian iconography, the egg symbolizes hope and resurrection by the manner in which the chick breaks from the egg at its birth. A similar emergence is implied in the womb delivering its child and might likewise be anticipated in the urn giving up its ashes in the Resurrection. Jonathan Post suggests that a careful reader might also be tempted to see the extraction of the urns from the earth as a type of the Resurrection.<sup>40</sup> He goes on to suggest that Browne's use of metaphor in *Urne-Buriall* is subtle, 'leav[ing] connections vague and subliminal, under rather than overstated'.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, this significance is there for those who are diligent to make the metaphoric connections.

It is in fact entirely appropriate for the reader to dig deeply for meaning in *Urne-Buriall*. Browne began his own reading by stating that '[i]n the deep discovery of the Subterranean world, a shallow part would satisfy *some* enquirers' (1.135; emphasis added), implying that not everyone would or should be satisfied with the surface of things. In saying this he seems to be affirming the need for thorough and diligent investigation into the recent Norfolk discovery in order to fill gaps in current knowledge. Yet his empirical study of the urns never gets past the shallowest part of their significance, nor does his interest in them as curiosities. Where, then, are the depths that the fastidious inquirer reaches for? The depths are in the meaning which is found well below the surface of things. In *Religio Medici* Browne expresses it as a pursuit of reason to an '*o altitudo*' (1.18). This biblical allusion aptly locates where meaning finally resides for Browne: 'O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out!' (Romans 11.33).<sup>42</sup> To read the artefacts of the dead is to look for the mysteries of death they signify, namely the hope of Christian immortality. And so Browne, moving toward conclusion, asserts:

<sup>40</sup> On exhumation as a type of resurrection, see also Philip Major's essay in this volume.

<sup>41</sup> Post J.F.S., *Sir Thomas Browne* (Boston: 1987) 121.

<sup>42</sup> C.A. Patrides's edition of Browne's *Major Works* (London: 1977) notes that '*O altitudo*' is the Vulgate rendering for this verse (69 n. 41).

if any have been so happy as truly to understand Christian annihilation, extasis, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kisse of the Spouse, gustation of God, and ingressio into the divine shadow, they have already had an handsome anticipation of heaven; the glory of the world is surely over, and the earth in ashes unto them. (1.170)

To the patient empiricist, the silence of the urns might represent the need for a careful tabulation of more data, but the text's manipulation of *pathos* in the urge of frustrated curiosity is calculated to push the reader to a different source of satisfaction, in God. To read *Urne-Buriall* merely as an intellectual treatise is thus potentially misleading. The failure of its initial empirical inquiries is not a simple critique of new attitudes and approaches toward learning. Nor is the text as a whole a critique of curious collectors. Browne himself was one, as John Evelyn famously describes in his diary.<sup>43</sup> Such oddities clearly captured Browne's fancy. Rather, the discourse of collection in *Urne-Buriall* is evoked rhetorically to activate desire in the form of curiosity that cannot be satisfied in things themselves, enacting in the reader a mortification of desire that is answered by edification in the spiritual vision of its celebrated conclusion.

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<sup>43</sup> Evelyn J., *Diary* ed. E.S. de Beer, 6 vols (Oxford: 1955) 3.594.

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# ‘THERE IS ALL AFRICA [...] WITHIN US’: LANGUAGE, GENERATION AND ALCHEMY IN BROWNE’S EXPLICATION OF BLACKNESS

Siobhán Collins and Louise Denmead

*[...] the mind of Man is farre from the Nature of a cleare and equall glasse, wherein the beames of things should reflect according to their true incidence.<sup>1</sup>*

Thomas Browne’s *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into very many Received Tenents and commonly presumed Truths*, more commonly known as *Vulgar Errors*, was published in 1646 and reissued in five successive editions in the author’s lifetime. Within *Pseudodoxia*’s “cabinet of curiosity”, three chapters are devoted to the discussion of blackness (book VI, chapters X “Of the Blacknesse of Negroes”, XI “Of the same” and XII “A digression concerning Blacknesse”) which, though at times ‘plundered for choice quotations’,<sup>2</sup> have yet to receive full exposition and analysis.<sup>3</sup> Mary Baine Campbell offers the most detailed study of these chapters to date, but limits her analysis of Browne’s representation of blackness to eight pages.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, in keeping with Joan Bennett’s note that only two chapters in *Pseudodoxia* discuss the blackness of Negroes, Campbell also discounts Chapter XII; she says that in this chapter Browne ‘addresses the general referent of “Blackness”, separating it

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<sup>1</sup> Bacon F., *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. M. Kiernan (Oxford: 2000) 116.

<sup>2</sup> Killeen K., “‘Three pounds and fifteen shillings; the inconsiderable salary of Judas’: Seventeenth-century Exegesis, Cultural Historiography and Thomas Browne’s *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*”, *Renaissance Studies* 20 (2006) 502–519, here 509.

<sup>3</sup> References to *Pseudodoxia* are taken throughout from Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. R. Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford: 1981), and given in text. Claire Preston discusses *Pseudodoxia* as a textual representative of the seventeenth-century culture of collecting curiosities: Preston C., “In the Wilderness of Forms: Ideas and Things in Thomas Browne’s Cabinets of Curiosity” in Rhodes N. – Sawday J. (eds.), *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print* (London: 2000) 170–184; also Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) 111–122; on how *Pseudodoxia*’s encyclopaedic nature ‘lends itself perfectly to intellectual debt’, see Havenstein D., *Democratizing Sir Thomas Browne: Religio Medici and Its Imitations* (Oxford: 1999) 83–84.

<sup>4</sup> Baine Campbell M., *Wonder and Science: Imagining Worlds in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY & London: 1999) 89–96.

from the putatively paradoxical relation to human skin'.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, we see a thematic and philosophical link between Browne's focus on the materiality of blackness in this chapter and his earlier consideration of how black skin may have been acquired: each of the three chapters draws on imagery associated with alchemy.

To show the significance of Browne's articulation of the false origins and probable causes of blackness, his discussion will be examined within the context of contemporary rhetorical and scientific theories of colour, and of relations between self and world, microcosm and macrocosm. This essay will illustrate how Browne's use of figurative language to contest the two following commonly perceived notions – firstly, that blackness results from heliotropic causes; and secondly, that blackness is a divine curse 'derived unto them from Cham, upon whom it was inflicted for discovering the nakednesse of Noah' (1.518) – complicates, yet retains, the early modern European commonplace notion of blackness as deriving from an original white identity. This essay will also show that Browne's discussion of black skin as artifice, or something that may be 'procured', positions blackness within theories of art and nature; the imagination and generation; and thus interlinks with his more extended focus on alchemy and the materiality of blackness in the "Digression concerning Blacknesse".

### 1. 'Darkness and Light': Authority, Memory and Knowledge

Browne's scientific enquiry into "blackness" needs to be understood within the context of both the new seventeenth-century emphasis on empirical research and the idea of correspondences between subject and object that underpins the ancient microcosm-macrocosm model of the universe. Man as microcosm is both of nature and, through his rational faculties, distinct from it.<sup>6</sup> The alchemist-physician Paracelsus (1493–1541) believed that a physician should study cosmography, since correspondences and similitudes between the microcosm and the macrocosm constitute the foundation of all knowledge.<sup>7</sup> Browne pursues

<sup>5</sup> Bennett J., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Man of Achievement in Literature* (Cambridge: 1962) 183; Baine Campbell M., *Wonder and Science* 93.

<sup>6</sup> We will employ the term 'man' for the generic human species in keeping with the practice of the period.

<sup>7</sup> See De Jong H.M.E., "Introduction", in *Michael Maier's Atalanta Fugiens: Sources of an Alchemical Book of Emblems* (Leiden: 1969) 1–48.

the notion that the world is replicated in the self throughout his works. In *Religio Medici*, he writes:

wee carry with us the wonders, wee seeke without us: There is all *Africa*, and her prodigies in us; we are that bold and adventurous piece of nature, which he that studies wisely learnes in a *compendium*, what others labour at in a divided piece and endlesse volume.<sup>8</sup>

Browne's analogy compares the macrocosm to a 'divided piece and endlesse volume' and the microcosm or self to a more integrated 'compendium' from which one can with less labour gain knowledge of the world and all its inhabitants, for the world with all its wonders is contained within the self. An understanding of the microcosmic self, for Browne, is the means towards knowledge and scientific truth.

Browne's attack on vulgar errors is written in the service of scientific truth. In his address "To the Reader" in *Pseudodoxia*, Browne bemoans the 'endlesse volume[s]' of works that not only perpetuate error down through the ages, but add to it. He asserts in the preface that he is not 'Magisteriall' nor 'Dictator-like' in his opinions, and that it is 'open [...] for any to thinke or declare the contrary'.<sup>9</sup> Nor does he claim absolute knowledge; rather, he subjects his '[e]nquiries [...] unto more ocular discerners' ("To the Reader", 1.4). Jonathan F.S. Post maintains that Browne fails in his attempt 'to resist the tyranny' of authority, which 'still looms large in *Pseudodoxia*'.<sup>10</sup> However, what Browne opposes in his text is not authority but uncritical adherence to textual tradition. *Pseudodoxia* offers an extraordinary accumulation of commonplace error, which it attempts to disprove and replace with knowledge derived from the 'three determinators of truth': 'Authority, Sense and Reason' (1.176). The range of subjects he introduces in *Pseudodoxia* is vast: the structure of the book, somewhat reflecting the storehouses of memory envisioned by classical and early modern rhetoricians, is arranged with an eye for order under a series of headings sub-divided into chapters and subsections. The headings correspond to a hierarchical and interlinked chain of being, with "Man" being the subject and title of the central book. This structure positions man between animality and providential history, emulating the entire medieval/early modern cosmic tradition.

<sup>8</sup> Browne T, *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) 1.24.

<sup>9</sup> His willingness to revise and make changes to his work is evident in the editions of 1650, 1658, and 1672.

<sup>10</sup> Post J.F.S., *Sir Thomas Browne* (Boston: 1987) 106.

Browne's argument in his preface to *Pseudodoxia*, that 'to purchase a clear and warrantable body of Truth, we must forget and part with much wee know' (1.1), seeks to relieve communal memory of the over-abundance of undigested and undigestible information.<sup>11</sup> The crucial role forgetting plays in human life is again emphasized in *Urne-Buriall*: 'Darknesse and light divide the course of time, and oblivion shares with memory a great part even of our living beings.'<sup>12</sup> Through the act of forgetting, Browne seeks to clear a space within memory wherein accurate information can be properly stored, assimilated and put to scientific use.<sup>13</sup> Browne both employs the traditional metaphorical association of darkness with oblivion and memory with light, and at the same time asserts a positive role for darkness and oblivion in the pursuit of truth and knowledge. '[L]ux est umbra Dei', he writes in *Religio Medici*, while *The Garden of Cyrus* has it that '[l]ight that makes things seen, makes some things invisible: were it nor [sic] for Darknesse and the shadow of the earth, the noblest part of the Creation [sc. the stars and heavenly bodies] had remained unseen'.<sup>14</sup> This trope of light and dark, as we will show, interlinks with the rhetoric of alchemy that Browne employs in his discussion of blackness in *Pseudodoxia*. He links the Ethiopian with material corruption at the nigredo, or blackening, phase of the alchemical process, thus, symbolically, connecting the colour black not simply to putrefaction but also to the first stage of achieving enlightenment.<sup>15</sup>

In his concerns with the origins of blackness, Browne first counters the belief that Africans' proximity to the sun caused the blackness of their skin, a notion that he traces back to Aristotle and the Greek word *Æthiops*, meaning those of 'a burnt and torrid countenance'

<sup>11</sup> Browne also uses the metaphor of digestion, commonly associated with the act of reading, for alchemical transformation. See Merton S., "Old and New Physiology in Sir Thomas Browne: Digestion and Some Other Functions", *Isis* 57 (1966) 249–259.

<sup>12</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.168.

<sup>13</sup> See Williams G., "Textual Crudities in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Thomas Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*", in Ivic C. – Williams G. (eds.), *Forgetting in Early Modern English Literature and Culture: Lethe's Legacies* (New York: 2004) 67–82, here 67–70.

<sup>14</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.218.

<sup>15</sup> Nigredo, meaning blackness, is the Latin term for the first of the three basic phases of the alchemical process, the second is the Albedo (whitening) phase and the final phase is Rubedo (reddening); each phase is essential to alchemical transformation and corresponds to the processes of decay, purification and a union of opposites, respectively.

(1.508). This opinion of the sun as cause is, Browne states, 'generally embraced', though he acknowledges that it is rejected by a number of early modern authors (1.508). One author that Browne may have in mind is George Best (1555–1584) whose *True Discourse* also contested the heliotropic origin of blackness.<sup>16</sup> Browne's argument that in the torrid regions there are men 'whose complexions descend not so low as blacknesse' and that places of the same latitude as Africa have inhabitants who are not dark-skinned (1.510) had previously been made by Best. However, Browne disputes the assertion of writers, such as Best, who argue that blackness derives from divine punishment. Browne states that the notion of blackness as a curse is 'a perpetuall promotion of Ignorance' (1.522), validating his claim that the origin and nature of blackness is 'amply and satisfactorily discussed [...] by no man' (1.508). When satisfied that he has 'at least made dubious' that the sun is 'the Author of this blacknesse', Browne admits that 'how and when this tincture first began is yet a Riddle, and positively to determine it surpasseth my presumption' (1.513). This could be read as an indication of Browne's lack of audacity, his refusal to 'too narrowly define the power of God, restraining it to our capacities';<sup>17</sup> or, alternatively, it may be read as Browne's humble recognition that he is unlikely to succeed where the best theorists in optics have as yet failed in deducing the nature of colour. It is through appropriately metaphorical and self-consciously paradoxical language that Browne laments the failings of these theorists, whose previous attempts to discover the nature and cause of colour have but left 'our endeavours to grope [...] out by twilight, and by darknesse [...] [colour] whose existence is evidenced by light' (1.507). The questions of how the eye perceives, and whether colour inhered in the object or was solely dependent on light, were fervently debated, and inextricably linked with theories of knowledge. Early modern accounts of perception interrelate with Browne's explication of how blackness may be procured and will be briefly discussed in the next section. The point we wish to stress here is that for followers of Aristotle, such as Albertus Magnus (?1206–1280), whose account of

<sup>16</sup> Best G., *A True Discourse of the late Voyages of Discouerie* (London: 1578) 30–32. Browne would have had access to Best's work; as James Walvin points out, Best's *Discourse* was translated into Latin, French and Italian, even before its incorporation into the third edition of Hakluyt's travel commentaries in 1600. See Walvin J., *Black and White: The Negro and English Society 1555–1945* (London: 1973) 32–33.

<sup>17</sup> In *Religio Medici*; Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.38.

colour is similar to Browne's, material variations in bodies bring about their different colours: colour is present in darkness, but lack of light prevents us from seeing it.<sup>18</sup> Colour is 'evidenced by light' (1.507). For Browne, as for many seventeenth-century philosophers, colours are inherent in objects, actually and materially present, but dependent on light and the presence of a transparent medium for their visibility. In *Pseudodoxia*, blackness, as colour, has material existence in the bodies of dark-skinned people, and Browne seeks the answer to his question, 'why some men [...] should first acquire and still retain the glosse and tincture of blacknesse' (1.508) in material causes.

## 2. *How Blackness is Procured: Generation and the Imagination*

Browne's investigation into that which may 'procure' black skin implies a view of blackness as not just material, but artificial. If it is procured, it must be derived from something else: blackness is not original, but a 'mutation' and 'defect', suggesting that it derives from an original white identity (1.514, 1.510).<sup>19</sup> Firstly, Browne considers whether blackness might be derived from the consumption of the 'water of Siberis': 'we have records' that it 'made Oxen black, and the like effect it had also upon men, dying not onely the skin, but making their haire black and curled' (1.513). With this example, Browne implies that not only black skin, but also other physical attributes associated with it – curly hair – are all attributes that may be 'procured'.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the language of dyeing that Browne uses here links with his notion of 'Artificial negroes' and his rhetoric of alchemy which we will discuss later in this essay (1.514).

Browne proposes another possible derivation for blackness in the 'power and efficacy of Imagination'. The imagination, he writes, 'pro-

<sup>18</sup> As Bennett points out, in *Pseudodoxia* Browne draws on Albertus Magnus' writings, recognizing him as a great authority on natural history (Bennett J., *Thomas Browne* 160); see also Guerlac H., "Can there be Colors in the Dark? Physical Color Theory before Newton", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 47 (1986) 3–20, here 11.

<sup>19</sup> This is a commonplace in this period. For example, Helkiah Crooke describes the skin as 'naturally white, but according to the humours that abound, or the bodyes under it [...] it varieith the colour'; see Crooke H., *Mikrokosmographia: a Description of the Body of Man: Together with the Controversies thereto Belonging* (London: 1615) 72.

<sup>20</sup> Crooke maintains that 'the haire curleth by reason of the drinessse of the temper; and therefore all Black-Moores have curled or crised haire' (Crooke H., *Mikrokosmographia* 68).

duceth effects in the conception correspondent unto the phancy of the Agents in generation, and sometimes assimilates the Idea of the generator into a reality in the thing ingendred'. Browne awards to the imagination a power so remarkable and strong that it can manifest in reality what is perceived in the mind. He offers the reader 'indisputed examples' of the imagination's physical manifestations, including the oft-cited case in Hippocrates where a woman 'from an intent view of a Picture conceavea a Negroe', and also of a 'Moorish Queene', who by gazing on 'the picture of Andromeda, conceavea and brought forth a fair one' (1.513).

In the two examples Browne cites – a black child conceived by a white woman, and a white child born to a black woman – women conceive a child of a different skin colour to their own through the combination of the interlinked faculties of vision and imagination. With regard to optics, in brief, early modern theories of perception, prior to Newton, were derived largely from two main classical doctrines of sight: on the one hand, the intromissionist model, endorsed by Aristotle, held that objects emitted 'sensible species' (including those of colour) which traversed a transparent medium, illuminated by light, to reach and enter the eye.<sup>21</sup> On the other, extramissionist theories argued that the eye emits rays that allow it to see, and thus ultimately understand, an object.<sup>22</sup> John Donne (1572–1631) manipulates for poetic purposes both extramissionist and intromissionist theories. In "The Extasie", he writes of how eyebeams emanate from the lover's eye and twist with those of his beloved; however, in "The First Anniversarie", which is concerned with the nature of knowledge, the intromissionist model holds sway: 'to our eyes, the forms from objects flow'.<sup>23</sup> While Donne uses philosophical contraries to inform his conceits, the increasing practice of anatomical dissection resulted in the slow and gradual erosion of the notion of rays being emitted from the eyes in favour of a modified Aristotelian intromissionist theory of sight. In *Discourse of the Preservation of Sight*, André du Laurens (1558–1609) adopts and adapts the dominant Aristotelian theory. In a remarkable statement that expresses, through

<sup>21</sup> *De anima*, 418a25–419b3.

<sup>22</sup> See Lindberg D., "Alhazen's Theory of Vision and Its Reception in the West", *Isis* 58 (1967) 321–341; see also Smith A.M., *Ptolemy and the Foundations of Ancient Mathematical Optics: A Source Based Guided Study* (Philadelphia: 1999) 23–50.

<sup>23</sup> Donne J., "The Extasie" and "The First Anniversarie" in *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. J. Shawcross (New York: 1967) 130 (ll. 5–8), 281 (l. 306), respectively.

the use of military metaphors, the sheer physical force inherent in the notion of images penetrating the eye from without, du Laurens writes that the eye is ‘warlike’ as it intercepts and ‘break[s] off the first charge of the objects thereof, assaying all upon the sudden, and with headlong violence to make breach and entrance’. However, once an ‘object’ has successfully penetrated the vitreous humour (which du Laurens glosses as ‘waterish’), the optic nerve acts as a messenger between the brain and the eye, allowing the brain to judge ‘whatsoever hath been seen’.<sup>24</sup> It is the imagination that acts as the conduit through which sense impressions, or ‘formes from objects’, are transmitted to the higher faculties of the intellect, where they are processed, altered and in turn act on the body. As Browne’s citation of Hippocrates shows, an actual physical manifestation – such as a female conceiving of a child of a different skin colour to her own – could result from the combined effect of the sight and judgement of external objects.

The notion of producing a child of a different skin colour to its biological parents through the power of sight and the imagination is dependent not only on the authority of the Aristotelian intromissionist theory of vision, but also on the Galenic model of the humoral make-up of the sexes.<sup>25</sup> In humoral theory, for instance, the dominance of phlegm in female flesh argued for woman’s limited mental capacity.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the female’s lack of ability to correctly judge the form that penetrates her sight from without could result in her rational faculties being overruled and her passive reception and transformation of the image into matter.<sup>27</sup> Browne’s citing of examples of female concep-

<sup>24</sup> Du Laurens A., *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight: of Melancholike Diseases; of Rheumes, and of Old Age*, trans. R. Surphlet (London: 1599) 32. See also Lobanov-Rostovsky S., “Taming the Basilisk”, in Hillman D. – Mazzio C. (eds.), *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe* (New York: 1977) 195–217, here 201.

<sup>25</sup> For Aristotle, the eye is the most seminal of organs: ‘a proof of this is that it alone is visibly changed in sexual intercourse, and those who indulge too much in this are seen to have their eyes sunken in’. Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* II 747a, trans. A. Platt, in *The Works of Aristotle*, eds. J.A. Smith – W.D. Ross, 12 vols (Oxford: 1912) vol. 5. See also Jacquart D. – Thomassat C., *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. M. Adamson (Princeton, NJ: 1988) 56.

<sup>26</sup> Of course, melancholic men were also considered to be subject to the physical manifestations of their faulty imaginations. See Gowland A., “The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy”, *Past & Present* 191 (2006) 77–120, esp. 90–93.

<sup>27</sup> Aristotle discusses the error which can result from an overactive imagination in *De anima*, 461b 1–17; for the female’s perceived lack of control in humoral theory see Paster G., *Humoring the Body: Emotions and the Shakespearean Stage* (Chicago, IL: 2004) 78–79.

tion by 'an intent view of a Picture', as previously quoted, suggests (in keeping with the general belief of his time) the female's particular susceptibility to the dangerous transforming power of the imagination; her humoral disposition upsets the proper functioning of her rational abilities to interpret and control bodily senses. The power of maternal imagination on the embryo is generally accepted in this period, though this ability is most often linked with the demonic and the monstrous rather than with any positive agency.<sup>28</sup>

In seeming contradiction to his account of the myth of the white female's conception of a black child through the power of sight and imagination, Browne moves to argue that blackness 'is evidently *maintained by generation*, and by the tincture of the skin as a spermatcall part traduced from *father unto son*' (our emphases, 1.516).<sup>29</sup> Early modern theories of generation debated the female's contribution to conception, following either Aristotelian or Galenic physiology. For Aristotle, the female role in reproduction is that of an empty vessel (alembic or womb), contributing nothing of essence to the formation of the embryo.<sup>30</sup> In contrast, Galen defends the notion of female sperm, and the necessity of the intermingling of male and female sperm for conception to take place. However, Galen's insistence on the existence of female sperm does not allow the female an equal role to that of the male in generation: the vital spirits are entirely contributed by the male sperm.<sup>31</sup> The woman's function is limited to the reception and nourishment of the formative male seed: thus it is the colour of the father which matters in the transmission of blackness.

George Best purports to witness, and thereby give his personal authority to, a situation whereby the male possesses the power to determine the colour of the offspring:

<sup>28</sup> See Bitbol-Hespériè A., "Monsters, Nature, and Generation from the Renaissance to the Early Modern Period: the Emergence of Medical Thought" and Smith J., "Imagination and the Problem of Heredity in Mechanist Embryology", in Smith J. (ed.), *The Problem of Animal Generation in Early Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: 2006) 47–65, and 80–103 respectively.

<sup>29</sup> Robert Boyle also attributes black skin to 'some Peculiar and Seminal Impression', see his *Experiments and Considerations Touching Colours* (London: 1664) 161.

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *De generatione animalium* II 739b.

<sup>31</sup> Galen, *On the Natural Faculties*, trans. and intro. A.J. Brook (London: 1916) 49.

I my selfe have seen an Ethiopian as black as cole broughte into Englande, who taking a faire Englishe woman to Wife, begatte a sonne in all respectes as black as the father was, although England were his native Countrey, and an English woman his mother.<sup>32</sup>

For Browne, likewise, blackness, once it is procured, by whatever means, is passed on through generation via the male seed. Blackness is to be attributed to the father's 'spermaticall' contribution to generation. Browne asserts that all seed is originally white. Employing alchemical imagery which he will further develop in his "Digression on Blackness", he states that the sperm of 'Negroes' is

first and in its naturals white, but upon separation of parts, accidents before invisible become apparent; there arising a shadow or dark efflorescence in the outside, whereby not onely their legitimate and timely births, but their abortions are also dusky, before they have felt the scortch and fervor of the Sun. (1.516–517)

Browne upholds the notion that blackness is maintained by generation, but originates in white identity. He stresses that blackness is apparent from the moment the foetus begins to develop. The whiteness of the sperm of 'Negroes' alters in the womb to a 'dusky' colour, which Browne observes from their 'abortions'. As Baine Campbell notes, Browne's focus on how blackness is first obtained 'moves from the exterior surface to surfaces more and more interior, or anterior, from scorched skin to "inward use of certain waters" to seminal properties'.<sup>33</sup> However, the move inward does not exclude the exterior, but conflates the two into one, in the sense that white sperm contains within itself the potential for black skin. Browne details the transformation from white to black using alchemical language. He suggests that an original unity, represented as white, undergoes a 'separation of parts' which results in secondary 'accidents', represented as black. The physician and the alchemist draw on shared vocabulary: the term 'abortion', which in Browne's quotation above refers to the physical body, is also applied by the alchemist to describe the stage when the opus fails to reach fruition.<sup>34</sup> 'Abortion' is associated with error and 'accidents' in the alchemical process. As will become clear, Browne views the human body in alchemical terms. To appreciate further the significance of

<sup>32</sup> Best G., *A True Discourse* 29.

<sup>33</sup> Baine Campbell M., *Wonder and Science* 92.

<sup>34</sup> Abraham L., *A Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: 1998) 2.

Browne's use of alchemical language to discuss the material and the philosophical body first necessitates an understanding of his complex interrogation of blackness's relation to beauty and deformity, to which we will now turn.

### 3. *Beauty and Blackness*

Kim Hall's influential study of race in the early modern period both misconstrues and overlooks the complexity of Browne's explication of blackness when she argues that for the author of *Pseudodoxia*, 'blackness and beauty are mutually dependent'.<sup>35</sup> As we will show, Browne draws on several, often conflicting, discourses in his consideration of whether or not blackness can be directly linked to either beauty or deformity. These discourses include classical definitions of beauty, the Bible – 'I am black, but comely' (Song of Solomon 1.5) – and early modern philosophical and literary discussions of black skin.

As we have seen, contemporary writings, such as Best's *True Discourse*, often represented blackness as a curse. Browne deems this position 'no way reasonable', and counters it by an emphasis on the role of opinion in assessments of both deformity and beauty:

[w]hereas men affirm this colour was a Curse, I cannot make out the propriety of that name, it neither seeming so to them [black people], nor reasonably unto us; for they take so much content therein, that they esteeme deformity by other colours, describing the Devill, and terrible objects White. (1.520)

The association of blackness with deformity is not universal, and thus has no greater status than opinion. For instance, Browne argues, 'if wee seriously consult the definitions of beauty, and exactly perpend what wise men determine thereof, wee shall not apprehend a curse, or any deformity' in blackness (1.520). He points out that the two standard definitions of beauty are founded on 'Symmetry and complexion', or in other words, proportion and colour. However, even when these receive 'various apprehensions', Browne stresses 'that no deviation will bee expounded so high as a curse or undenieable deformity, without a manifest and confessed degree of monstrosity' (1.522). There is an

<sup>35</sup> Hall K.F., *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: 1995) 12–13.

ambiguity in this last phrase in relation to complexion or colour: on the one hand, Browne seems to be suggesting that in order to see blackness as a curse, the particular black person that is the object of discussion must be manifestly monstrous in some way that has nothing to do with the colour of his or her skin; a second and more straightforward reading implies that to see deformity in a black person is a mark of ‘monstrosity’ in the subject or viewer. Either way, the point is clear: blackness *per se* is no deformity.

As we saw in the first section, Browne does not intend in *Pseudodoxia* to demolish reliance on authority entirely, only to discriminate between those worth attending to and those to be discarded. There are some opinions on beauty and deformity which are worth more than others, and Browne uses the best of ‘learned Writers’ to provide further reasons why blackness is not equivalent to deformity. The best of ‘learned Writers’ see the essence of beauty ‘in the proportion of parts’ and the ‘commensurability of the whole unto the parts’ (1.520–521). Such a definition does not, Browne claims, exclude dark-skinned people from beauty, ‘there being in this description no consideration of colours, but an apt connexion and frame of parts and the whole’ (1.520). Although some writers extend the definition of beauty to inhere also in ‘the grace of colour’, Browne points out that neither Aristotle nor Galen do (1.521).

Browne also relies on Platonic conflations of the interior and the exterior within definitions of beauty in his refutation of the deformity and curse of blackness. The Platonic conception of beauty does not rely ‘upon parts or colours’; rather it defines beauty as ‘a formall grace, which delights and moves them to love which comprehend it’ (1.521). Although, as we will detail, Browne’s use of language suggests at times that he is embedded in many of the prejudices of his period, his implication that black skin may be included within the Platonic interlinking of beauty and morality subverts the widespread linking of blackness with moral depravity in this period.<sup>36</sup> Browne makes an implicit reference to the correspondence between beauty, knowledge and virtue in Plato’s theory when he states that beauty results when mental faculties ‘can aptly contrive their matter’ (1.521). For Browne,

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<sup>36</sup> This association between blackness and moral corruption, evident in Best’s work, was also reiterated in the dramatic texts of the period. See Tokson E., *The Popular Image of the Black Man in English Drama 1550–1688* (Boston, MA: 1982).

colour is irrelevant to beauty and monstrosity; more precisely, beauty results when the rational faculties 'aptly' contrive matter; monstrosity or deformity results when reason is overruled by matter or the senses: out of 'the same materials [...] beauty and monstrosity' may be contrived (1.521). Browne is again emphasizing the necessity of control over bodily passions, which, as we have previously suggested, relates also to the role of the imagination and its physical effects. Rather than making blackness and beauty 'mutually dependent', as Hall suggests, Browne denies any necessary dependence between beauty, deformity, and the colour of one's skin.

Having discussed various classical theories of the concept of beauty, Browne asserts that in its 'singularities' it is 'determined by opinion [...] according as custome hath made it naturall, or sympathy and conformity of minds shall make it seem agreeable' (1.522). This recognition and acceptance of the relativity of beauty is remarkable. Browne's subversion of early modern racial discourse in this instance is all the more striking when one considers John Bulwer's slightly later discussion of blackness in his *Anthropometamorphosis*, which does not allow scope for blackness within beauty.<sup>37</sup> Bulwer (1606–1656) relies on Browne's exposition of how blackness is procured by art, the imagination and generation, directly citing 'our ingenious Author' of the 'vulger Errors'; however, he scorns the notion that beauty is relative and determined by custom.<sup>38</sup> Robert Boyle (1627–1691) follows Browne's argument that blackness is not inconsistent with theoretical conceptions of beauty closely, though he does not go as far as to suggest that beauty is relative.<sup>39</sup>

Having considered the evidence from scholarly and ancient authority, Browne turns to scriptural precedent for his insistence that blackness is not intrinsically a deformity:

we that are of contrary complexions accuse the blacknes of the Mores as ugly: But the Spouse in the Canticles excuseth this conceit, in that description of hers, I am black, but comely. And howsoever Cerberus, and the furies of hell be described by the Poets under this complexion, yet in the Beauty of our Saviour blacknesse is commended, when it is said his locks are bushie and blacke as a Raven. (1.522)

<sup>37</sup> Bulwer J., *Anthropometamorphosis: man transform'd: or, The artificiall changling* (London: 1653).

<sup>38</sup> Bulwer J., *Anthropometamorphosis* 466–469.

<sup>39</sup> Boyle R., *Experiments* 160.

In citing the examples of how the dark skin colour of ‘the Spouse in the Canticles’ and Christ’s raven-coloured hair are both considered beautiful in the biblical text of the Song of Solomon, Browne seeks directly to contradict the biased association of blackness with ugliness. As Browne’s reference to Cerberus and the furies of hell suggests, his discussion of blackness in *Pseudodoxia* also subverts the conventional link between blackness, hell and the demonic, often expressed in literature and enacted on the stage.<sup>40</sup>

Browne also subverts the link between blackness, hell and the demonic in his scientific considerations of the properties of sulphur in Chapter XII. He considers the properties of sulphur and notes that its smoke, conventionally associated with the flames of hell, does not ‘blacke linnen’ but rather whitens it (1.526). Boyle also mentions this experiment in *Experiments and Considerations Touching Colours*,<sup>41</sup> but does not share Browne’s conclusion in *Pseudodoxia* that ‘to conceive a generall blacknesse in Hell [...] is no Philosophicall conception, nor will it consist with the reall effects of its [sulphur’s] nature’ (1.526). In other words, Browne grants the real, material effects of blackness a probative relation to received theological ideas.

Both Bulwer and Browne, in their very different but, as we will see, related discussions of artificial blackness, engage in the philosophical debate on the relationship between nature and art. Bulwer denigrates art as represented by women’s use of cosmetics to darken their skin, which he states arises ‘from some conceit they might have of the beauty of blacknesse, and an Apish desire which might move them to change the complexion of their bodies into a new and more fashionable hue’.<sup>42</sup> For Bulwer, art is morally corrupt in its attempt to alter nature. In contrast, Browne’s argument that ‘beauty and monstrosity’ may both be contrived is more equivocal in its consideration of the relationship between nature, art and morality: natural bodies, as first created by God, have, for Browne, a correspondence between inner and outer beauty, an ‘exactnesse in every kinde’, as do ‘contrived bodies’ in the ‘phancie of the Artificer’ (1.521). Unlike Bulwer, Browne views art and artifice positively, if with caution, once it is used to inform the natural

<sup>40</sup> Barthelemy A.G., *Blackface, Maligned Race: The Representations of Blacks in Renaissance Drama from Shakespeare to Southerne* (Baton Rouge, LA: 1987).

<sup>41</sup> Boyle R., *Experiments* 177–180.

<sup>42</sup> Bulwer J., *Anthropometamorphosis* 468–469.

philosopher of the correspondences that existed in nature prior to the Fall.

#### 4. 'This deepe and perfect glosse of blackness': *Art and Alchemy*

Despite the critical tendency to view Browne's chapter XII, the "Digression", as separate in object from the first two chapters on blackness, the three are closely interwoven through their use of alchemical language and imagery. Intellectual interest in alchemy reached its zenith during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe.<sup>43</sup> Browne draws attention to the microcosmic/macrocospic doctrine of correspondence, central to alchemy, in his discussion of the materiality of blackness. This doctrine was based on the belief that all matter, including man and the natural world, was made up of a mix of the same constitutive elements; a change in the proportions of the mixture resulted in an alteration or transformation of the material body. Therefore, from 'blacke humour [...] commonly translated *Atramentum*', which colours blackberries and black cherries, 'Moores might possibly become Negroes, receiving Atramentous impressions in some of those wayes' (1.528–529). For Browne, nature and art are mutually informative. That he gives further and more detailed thought to this relationship is evident in his addition of a note on 'Artificial Negroes' to the 1658 edition of *Pseudodoxia*, according to which, 'Artificial Negroes' 'acquire their complexion by anointing their bodies with Bacon and fat substances' (1.514). The note thus highlights the idea of the possible transformation of nature through art. Browne considers the possibility that the practice of painting the skin may have had 'some efficacy toward this complexion' (1.514), which, as we have seen, he describes as a 'mutation' from an original, the definite cause of which has fallen into 'great obscurities' (1.515).

Browne's use of the term 'atramental' (1.527), defined by the *OED* as 'pertaining to ink', opens up an array of cognate terms associating blackness of skin with various substances.<sup>44</sup> It passes into Bulwer's use: he describes how 'Moores might possibly become Negroes', by 'receiving atramentitious impression, by the power and efficacy of imagination'.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Abraham L., *Dictionary* 2, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Browne's usage provides the first citation in the *OED* s.v. atramental (adj.).

<sup>45</sup> Bulwer J., *Anthropometamorphosis* 469; with regard to Bulwer's 'atramentitious',

*The New World of English Words* (1658), a dictionary compiled by Edward Phillips (1630–1696), defines ‘atramental’ as ‘belonging to ink’.<sup>46</sup> Black skin was often associated with the blackness of ink at this time.<sup>47</sup> The cognate term ‘atrate’, deriving more directly from the Latin adjective ‘ater’, black, is defined in Henry Cockerham’s *English Dictionarie* (1623) as ‘one cladde in blacke, a mourner’.<sup>48</sup> The connection between black skin, materiality and mortality is emphasized throughout the literature of the early modern period. For instance, in Eldred Revett’s poem “One Enamour’d on a Black-Moor” (1657), the black woman is described as having ‘a *Cypress skin*’:<sup>49</sup> cypress is a thin fabric which was dyed black and used for funeral livery.<sup>50</sup> The work of the alchemist and the art of dyeing fabric is linked; Browne articulates this connection in his reference to ‘the visible art of Dyars, who advance and graduate their colours with Salts’ (1.529).<sup>51</sup> Salt is one of the ‘three principles’ of practical alchemy, along with sulphur and mercury, corresponding on a human level to body, spirit and soul respectively.<sup>52</sup> As we have already seen, Browne’s choice of alchemical language to describe biological process is not arbitrary: by using the term ‘Atramentous’, he not only associates black skin with the vocabulary of dyeing and alchemical colour experiments, but

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Kathryn Murphy observes that it may be a pun combining Browne’s ‘atramental’ and ‘mentitious’, from the Latin *mentitio* (“lying”, “falsehood”), thus feeding into Bulwer’s moral position on artifice and especially cosmetics which we discuss above. The word appears to be Bulwer’s coinage.

<sup>46</sup> Phillips E., *The New World of English Words* (London: 1658) D2<sup>v</sup>. The *OED* definition is ‘of or pertaining to ink’; it derives from the Latin *atramentum*, blacking or ink; *OED* s.v. *atramentum* (n).

<sup>47</sup> George Herbert’s “To the Right Hon. the L. Chancellor (Bacon)”, for example, states, ‘my Ink was factious [i.e. biased]’ for writing on the subject of the ‘blackamoor’ (12), from Herbert G., *Works*, ed. F.E. Hutchinson (Oxford: 1945) 209 (under “Doubtful Poems”).

<sup>48</sup> Cockerham H., *English Dictionarie* (London: 1623) B8<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> Revett E., *Poems* (London: 1657) 93, l. 32.

<sup>50</sup> See also the poem “A Fair Nymph Scorning a Black Boy Courting Her”, which is included both in Revett’s *Poems* (65–66) and in John Cleveland’s *The Character of a London-diurnal with Severall Select Poems* (London: 1647) 22–23, where the boy’s black skin is described as ‘mourning weeds’ (l. 28). What Ian Smith succinctly calls a ‘chromatic materiality’ where ‘Africans figure neither principally nor solely as persons but are construed as visible to English consciousness based on the shared feature of colour with specific objects’ is at work here. See Smith I., “White Skin, Black Masks: Racial Cross-Dressing on the Early Modern Stage”, *Renaissance Drama* 32 (2003) 33–67, here 37.

<sup>51</sup> Abraham highlights the ‘close relationship between the chemical laboratory, the dyer and the alchemist’ (Abraham L., *Dictionary* 63).

<sup>52</sup> De Jong H.M.E., *Michael Maier’s Atalanta Fugiens* 38.

also distinctly points to the art of alchemy, which depends on theories of correspondence between nature and man. Browne emphasizes the link between art and nature when he states (using esoteric terminology associated with alchemy) that bodies become black by means of 'an Atramentous condition or mixture, that is a vitriolate or copperose quality conjoining with a terrestrial and astringent humidity, for so is *Atramentum scriptorium*, or writing Inke commonly made' (1.526). For Browne, like Paracelsus, the human body viewed in alchemical terms becomes a 'chemical laboratory'.<sup>53</sup>

Alchemical discourse conflates material and human blackness: the Ethiopian stands as a symbol for the nigredo stage of alchemical process because of the black colour that appears at this initial phase of the alchemist's procedures. The nigredo phase is associated with corruption and putrefaction and involves dissolution, which releases salt from the blackened material body allowing transition into the next albedo (whitening) phase; however, as Abraham points out, 'only through experiencing [the nigredo phase] can the adept gain the wisdom and humility necessary for illumination'.<sup>54</sup> As we have seen in the first section of this essay, for Browne, darkness is necessary for the illumination of knowledge: 'were it not for Darkness [...] the noblest part of the Creation had remained unseen'.<sup>55</sup> Browne, like the alchemists, is concerned with the fundamental nature of matter – its properties, composition and changeability – 'for the sake of knowledge itself'.<sup>56</sup>

Browne's use of alchemical imagery is pervasive. In Chapter X alone he refers to blackness as a 'tincture' seven times.<sup>57</sup> "Tincture" has a range of meanings: it is straightforwardly a 'dye' or 'colour', which stresses its material properties, but "tincture" as an immaterial transformative entity or agent is suggested by its ability to 'infuse into material things' a 'spiritual principle'.<sup>58</sup> Paracelsus (1493–1541) describes 'tincture' as the '*Lily of Alchimy* [...] which the *Philosophers* have so accurately sought after', 'a most precious *Treasure*' that can be transmuted

<sup>53</sup> Park K., "Bacon's 'Enchanted Glass'", *Isis* 75 (1982) 290–302, here 293.

<sup>54</sup> Abraham L., *Dictionary* 136.

<sup>55</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.218.

<sup>56</sup> De Jong H.M.E., *Michael Maier's Atalanta Fugiens* 34.

<sup>57</sup> Browne refers to blackness as a tincture on pages 1.508; 1.510 (twice); 1.513; 1.514; 1.515; and 1.516.

<sup>58</sup> *OED* s.v. tincture 6a.

into the philosopher's stone.<sup>59</sup> It is in this sense that tincture can be described by the *OED* as the 'quintessence, spirit, or soul of a thing'. However, Browne's further references to black skin as 'Jetty' and 'paint' (1.511, 1.518), would seem to stress the negative nuance of the term "tincture", emphasizing its physical attributes as a colouring substance that stains or dyes, and would also seem to prefigure Bulwer's pejorative attitude towards cosmetics and artificiality. Yet, overall, contrivance and artificiality are not wholly negative in Browne. Considering the term "tincture" within the context of Browne's use of alchemical imagery throughout his study of blackness, the positive connotations of "tincture" as a synonym for the elixir are also present.

Abraham defines "tincture" as the 'philosopher's stone and elixir which tinges base metals to gold', intending for the somewhat pejorative verb 'tinges' the full positive force of "transmutes".<sup>60</sup> Just as Browne earlier stated that 'in the beauty of our Saviour blacknesse is commended', Christ also is associated with a 'noble tincture' in his ability to transform souls, a form of spiritual alchemy.<sup>61</sup> Donne describes Christ's death and resurrection in alchemical terms:

Hee was gold when he lay downe, but rose  
All tincture, and doth not alone dispose  
Leaden and iron wills to good, but is  
Of power to make even sinfull flesh like his.<sup>62</sup>

Donne puns on the word 'rose': Christ not only 'rose' from the dead, but in doing so he 'rose/All tincture', that is to say Christ became the tincture that has the power to transmute 'base metals to gold', and in the language of spiritual alchemy, to transform 'Leaden and iron wills to good'. The term 'rose', in this alchemical context, is emblematic of perfection and indicative of the final rubedo (reddening) phase, the ideal goal of the alchemical process whereby opposites are reconciled. Browne's employment of the term "tincture" to describe blackness brings into play both its positive and negative connotations. Success

<sup>59</sup> Paracelsus, *Of the Tincture of the Philosophers* (separately paginated) in *Paracelsus his Archidoxis: comprised in ten books*, trans. J.H. (London: 1660) 26.

<sup>60</sup> Abraham L., *Dictionary* 200.

<sup>61</sup> Underhill E., *Mysticism* (London: 1911). Cited by Keller J.R., "The Science of Salvation: Spiritual Alchemy in Donne's Final Sermon", *Sixteenth Century Journal* 23 (1992) 486–493, here 487. Underhill refers to the alchemist Jacob Boehme's "Three Fold Life of Man" in her description of Christ's role in spiritual alchemy.

<sup>62</sup> Donne J., "Resurrection, imperfect" in *Complete Poetry* 353–354 (ll. 13–16).

in the alchemical process depends not on a separation of positive and negative, but on a union of opposites, such as black and white, just as knowledge depends on some form of synthesis between memory, associated metaphorically with light, and the act of forgetting, symbolized by darkness.

### 5. *Conclusion*

In addition to his use of alchemical language, Browne draws on theories of sight, colour, generation and the imagination, as well as on classical concepts of beauty in his explication of blackness. As we have shown, the widely ranging discourses employed by Browne in his discussion of blackness both interrelate with, and at times appear to contradict, one another. Critics to date have neglected the connection between his first two chapters on blackness (X and XI) and the third chapter XII, “A Digression concerning Blackness”. However, as we have also shown, Browne’s use of alchemical language, along with his concern with the relation between art and nature, links the three chapters in the interest of the pursuit of knowledge. The vocabulary Browne uses in Chapter XII is consistent with his aims in the previous sections to find ‘a subtler act of reason’ in determining the true nature of colour (1.507). Browne’s open-minded eclecticism and his remarkable and detailed considerations of the nature of blackness serve to problematize and open to scrutiny more conventional and dogmatic contemporary views, affirming his prefatory claim that he is neither ‘Magisterial’ nor ‘Dictator-like’ in his opinions (1.4). Indeed, his account of blackness is remarkable in its refusal to see blackness as either a curse or a deformity. In the alchemical discourse Browne employs, which, as we again stress, is not limited to Chapter XII but extends throughout his discussions of blackness, human blackness is conflated with the blackness of material substances. The alchemical process offers a way of understanding the world as a correspondence of opposite principles, such as that of blackness and whiteness, the material and the spiritual. Moreover, the acknowledged difficulty of its “science”, and the ambivalent and figurative character of its language, gives voice to the complexity of the nature of blackness. The language of alchemy is enabling, in that it provides Browne with the vocabulary to consider blackness in skin, in the world, and in its use as trope, as part of a greater all; it also enables him to see blackness as essential to knowledge and to the pursuit of truth.

The opening and closing chapters in *Pseudodoxia*, as Preston and others have pointed out, link error with the devil. However, as this essay has argued, Browne does not associate blackness simply with the devil or with hell. Though blackness, for Browne, is secondary to whiteness, the inferiority associated with its secondary status, and suggested at times by his figuration of blackness as something that may be 'procured', is nonetheless complicated by his notion that blackness is intrinsically involved in the productive correspondence of opposites central to alchemy. This is further underpinned by the belief in the self as microcosmic, as reflected in Browne's claim in *Religio Medici*: 'wee carry with us the wonders, wee seeke without us: There is all Africa, and her prodigies in us'.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 1.24.

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## OF CYDER AND SALLETS: THE HORTULAN SAINTS AND *THE GARDEN OF CYRUS*

Claire Preston

It was seemingly beyond dispute that ‘for one poore Apple’ our first parents lost the banquet of Eden’s other dainties.<sup>1</sup> But when Thomas Browne decided to investigate ‘What Fruit that was which our first Parents tasted in Paradise?’ (3.10) his conclusion was not so sure.<sup>2</sup> This *quaere* is one of many vegetable enquiries in his tract “Observations upon Several Plants Mention’d in Scripture”, and it is followed up with a related discussion of the fig and of fig-leaves. Strikingly, Browne never once names the fatal fruit of the Edenic narrative as the apple. Instead, he considers at length various biblical cruces arising from imperfect translations of Middle Eastern botanical names. In some cases, he says, there simply are no local English equivalents of the original plants, and the species given are only vegetables ‘of good affinity unto them’; in other cases, the biblical name is ‘rendered by analogy’ with a vernacular word (3.10). In *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, where he also considers the fruit of the tree of knowledge, he notes that if the Greek word for apple ‘comprehendeth Orenges, Lemmons, Citrons, Quinces, and [...] such fruits as have no stone within’ (PE 1.538),<sup>3</sup> the *apple* as the forbidden fruit and vegetable agent of man’s fall must be in considerable philological doubt.

Browne chastises those who make out the apple from its suggestively wicked Latin botanical name as the lapsarian *malum*, merely ‘because that fruit was the first occasion of evill’ (PE 1.536). Although other authorities designated the forbidden fruit as a vine, as the Indian fig tree, as a kind of citron, as the *arbor vitae*, as the elder, and even as the banana, he returns to the fact that ‘there is no determination in the

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<sup>1</sup> Beaumont J., *Bosworth-Field* (London: 1629) 80.

<sup>2</sup> References to Browne’s works other than *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* are to Browne T., *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) and will be given in the text.

<sup>3</sup> All references to *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* are to Browne, T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. R. Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford: 1981) and will be given in the text, identified by the initials *PE*.

Text'. All that we have ever known about the fruit of knowledge is that it was both beautiful and tasty, 'in which regards many excell the Apple' (PE 1.537). 'After this fruit[,] curiosity fruitlessly enquireth', he comments drily; 'we shall surcease our Inquisition, rather troubled that it was *tasted*, than troubling our selves in its *decision*' (PE 1.539, emphases added). In other words, to make a botanical fuss about the forbidden fruit is really only a vulgar error propagated by the Devil to distract us from the true meaning of the event in Eden.

Contemporary horticulturalists concurred: for them the practical promulgation of fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, and of orchard-craft more broadly, was the antithesis of error, as cultivation in general achieved a moral, philosophical, even learned, status. 'We were present & stode by', say the pious fruit trees of Ralph Austen's *Dialogue* (1676), 'when thou, and thy wife, did both of you, transgresse the *Command of our Creator* [...] which we never yet did, nor ever shall; though we are much inferior to mankind'.<sup>4</sup> Austen (c. 1612–1676), a renowned Puritan orchardist, produced spiritual meditations upon his trees as well as practical fruit and cider manuals. For him, as for other georgic experts, cultivation was an act of devotion by which man's lost innocence could be at least in part restored. The poets went further, and imaginatively reversed the consequences of the fall by selecting apples to heal the lapsarian injury. In Andrew Marvell's (1621–1678) garden, apples conveniently drop down upon him along with various other fruits, nature's *sponte sua* and insistent agency replicated by nectarines and peaches as they oddly and reflexively 'reach themselves' into his hands; he *falls*, it is true, but only on grass, having been tripped by an inconvenient melon (or, perhaps, a *malum*). The Royalist Abraham Cowley (1618–1667), playing on and then rejecting the apple as the lapsarian fruit, elaborates the orchard as a redemptive place of knowledge and proclaims: 'The Orchard's open now, and free [...] Behold the ripen'd *Fruit*, come gather now your fill'.<sup>5</sup>

Browne's scholarly exoneration of the apple from lapsarian guilt would particularly have pleased contemporary orchardists, ciderists, and enthusiasts of vegetable diets, experts like Austen who were writing extensively about the virtues, spiritual and practical, of this fruit. But

<sup>4</sup> Austen R., *A Dialogue or Familiar Discourse and conference betweene the Husbandman and Fruit-trees* (London: 1676) 2–3.

<sup>5</sup> Cowley A., "To the Royal Society" in *The Works of Mr Abraham Cowley* (London: 1688) 39.

they would have disputed his casual demotion of its beauty and taste. Their vigorously recuperative writing about fruit trees, and apples in particular, was extensive, technical, polemical, and ideological. The apple figures pragmatically in their writing as a humble but healthy garden product, as a georgic vehicle of national prosperity, or a remnant millenarian signature of our ruin and redemption. As such it developed as a complex emblem of civil, salvationary knowledge in the shifting and evolving sensibilities of the Commonwealth and the Restoration. The orchard-manual and apple-treatise, as Browne suggests, are in their very undertaking a form of devulgarization: in bidding England to cultivate the so-called 'forbidden fruit', the orchardists are banishing a small piece of Satan's empire.

The ameliorative potential of fruit-growing in the seventeenth century is related to broader debates about the condition of the vegetable kingdom in relation to the Fall, a debate which was particularly vivid and current at mid-century and later in physico-theological ideas about the state of the planet and its ecosystems. In the Jacobean debate between Godfrey Goodman (1583–1656) and George Hakewill (1578–1649), views differed as to the precise nature of the damage inflicted upon the natural world by the fall of man. It was a debate (which Browne knew well) that pitched natural senescence against natural perfection. The first was hardly new, but it was revivified in 1616 by Goodman, an eloquent deteriorationist who argued that the world is progressively decaying and corrupting – animals are less large, herbs less potent than at the beginning of the world – and that 'the abominable filth and uncleanness of nature' is a symptom of universal imperfection. 'Lord how we are fallen', he says, 'from the garden of Paradise, to Paris-garden'.<sup>6</sup> Almost everything under the sun shows him this deterioration: for example, in childhood,

as soon as our strength serves us, then we begin to rob orchards, to rifle aple-lofts, ceasing upon forbidden fruits [...] this eating of fruits engendreth wormes in their mawe, their stomackes and bowels, their tender yong bodies become quicke Sepulchres, a womb for the wormes to feed

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<sup>6</sup> In other words, a disorderly place (alluding to a bear-baiting establishment on the south bank of the Thames). See Goodman G., *The Fall of Man, or the Corruption of Nature* (London: 1616) 18, 20.

upon their living carcases; see here the eating of this fruit, gives them the first token and assurance of their mortalities.<sup>7</sup>

The paradisial lapse is, for Goodman, re-enacted even in the harmless pranks of children. This view of the senility of the world was seconded, with various modifications, by Purchas, Ralegh, Donne, Burton, Herbert, and a host of lesser voices until the 1630s. Although vigorously disputed, even Francis Bacon's (1561–1626) magisterial opposition could not mitigate terrestrial decay as the dominant pattern of thought through the late 1620s, and it continued to flourish on the back of the learned investigations of natural philosophy later in the century. Thomas Burnet's (c. 1635–1715) *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1681), for example, did not insist on ongoing decay, but rated the damaged creation as imperfected at the moment of the fall, and but one step away from the combustion which would re-establish paradise on earth. This view was similar to that of Milton, Wilkins, and Comenius.

The answering, and very influential, riposte to deteriorationism, characterized by George Hakewill's *Apologie for the Power and Providence of God* (1627), defended the perfection of nature and chastised those who presumed to accuse God of an imperfect creation. This argument gained adherents over the following decades, especially among the scientific community, and notably among Copernicans. 'I [do] beleieve the world drawes near its end, yet is neither old nor decayed', Browne says in Hakewillian mode in *Religio Medici* (1.45). But the development of natural-philosophical theories of the earth based on the nascent disciplines of geology and palaeontology in the mid- and late-seventeenth century derives inspiration from both these positions – Goodman's notion of *decay* is translated into ideas of epochal *change*, and Hakewill's idea of perfection sponsors discussions of observable phenomena in their own right rather than as symptomatic of the teleology of terrestrial, natural senility. God's protection of the world from decay is regarded by Hakewill as an unanswerable proof of its augmenting perfection:

the reviving of the *Arts & Languages*, which for sundry ages lay buried in barbarisme, the rust of *superstition* was likewise in many places scowered off from Religion, which by degrees had crept upon it, & fretted deepe

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<sup>7</sup> Goodman G., *Fall of Man* 330. These remarks no doubt allude to Augustine's recollection of a theft of pears in his adolescence, an act, he concludes, pleasurable merely in its disobedience (*Confessions* II.iv.9).

into the face of it, [...] the *Arts* being thus refined, & Religion restored to its primitive brightnes.<sup>8</sup>

Because ‘God was the Original, and first Husbandman’,<sup>9</sup> the orchardists, like the natural philosophers, could derive their horticultural justification from either camp: to tend the natural world either acknowledges God’s order, admires the world’s perfection, and imitates the gardener Adam in Eden; or, the taming of nature is an act of reparation against its Adamic desecration and decay. Even a technical procedure such as grafting fruiting twigs of one species onto the rootstock of another could be holy work: Austen explains the human hybridization of plants as a necessary art to reunite stocks and grafts, which were separated in the Fall; for him, the orchardist is manually reconvening primitive fruit-species in imitation of God at the moment of creation and resurrection. Robert Boyle (1627–1691) recalled a youthful violation of his sister’s orchard as a vignette of honesty and honest curiosity, a condition for whose function of disinterested enquiry he coined the verb ‘to appelle’.<sup>10</sup>

The orchardists were but one category of writers in the seventeenth century whose keen attention was commanded by trees. Plantation of timber- and fruit-bearing species was, if not a new enthusiasm, newly advertised as a vital resource for profit and use, but also for pleasure.<sup>11</sup> Timber and fruit were agricultural commodities to be improved, but equally, they yielded spiritual, social, and intellectual profit, some of which borrowed its ideas from legend and local custom based on the civil or even sacred conception of trees, among these, apple-wassailing, and the sanctity of groves.<sup>12</sup> Trees are godly in the non-conformist ideology of Nicholas Billingsley (1633–1709), veritable saints who ‘one another’s Faith corroborate’ by flourishing in proximity,<sup>13</sup> and

<sup>8</sup> Hakewill G., *Apologie for the Power and Providence of God* (London: 1627) b3v.

<sup>9</sup> Blith W., *The English Improver Improved* (London: 1652) B2v.

<sup>10</sup> The fruit-stealing incident is remembered in Boyle R., *An Account of Philaretus During His Minority*, 4–5. The coinage ‘appelise’ (‘stealing fruit or robbing Orchards’) is noted by Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715) in his notes from biographical interviews with Boyle, and vouchsafed by Boyle (“Burnet Memorandum”, 28); both in *Robert Boyle By Himself and Others*, ed. M. Hunter (London: 1994).

<sup>11</sup> See Thomas K., *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500–1800* (London: 1983) 198–212.

<sup>12</sup> See Hutton R., *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (Oxford: 1994) 14. On groves, see *The Garden of Cyrus* 1.216.

<sup>13</sup> Billingsley N., *Thesauro-phylakion, or A treasury of divine raptures* (London: 1667) 151.

Edmund Waller (1606–1687) celebrates (with the usual arboreal Stuart similitudes) Charles I's (1600–1649) beautification of St James's Park with trees: although 'Of the first Paradice ther's nothing found', here among the trees Charles will walk and consult of laws and warfare. 'In such green Palaces the first Kings reign'd', and here Waller imagines that Charles, likewise, will ruminate, take counsel from the shades of the ancients, and consider 'rising Kingdoms [...] fallen States'.<sup>14</sup> John Evelyn (1620–1706), possibly the original environmental conservationist, recalls that when various profiteers and 'late prodigious spoilers'<sup>15</sup> attempted to have these same trees cut down, his own intervention saved them (and – typically of Evelyn – he believes he hears them saluting him whenever he walks among them). Trees are 'a Tabernacle in the wilderness',<sup>16</sup> and he reminds Charles II (1630–1685) that they remain 'the Treasure and Ornament of this *Nation*'.<sup>17</sup> Never one to neglect a political point, however, he also encourages the gentry to be planters who supply timber for the fleet. Like the orchardists, he does not deny such pragmatic intrusions in the 'hortulan' world.<sup>18</sup> Nor does Abraham Cowley, who observes that from trees come the wooden voices of musical instruments. He recommends a professorial chair in gardening, orchards, and vineyards at each of the universities.<sup>19</sup> 'Against the day of England's need', says the orchardist John Beale (1608–1683), fruit trees in particular will secure 'the improvement and welfare of our Native Country' by supplying essential, strengthening food and drink.<sup>20</sup> In his orchard-tract *Pomona*, Evelyn declares that a preference for Cider, a 'wholsom and more natural drink, [...] quite vanquish[es] Hops, and banish[es] all other *Drogues* of that nature'.<sup>21</sup> A number of the orchardists claim that cider is more economical than beer because much more

<sup>14</sup> Waller E., *On the Park at St James's* [sic] (London: 1660). The Stuart arboreal iconography was strongly invoked at the Restoration.

<sup>15</sup> Evelyn J., *Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest-Trees* (London: 1664) [A4<sup>r</sup>].

<sup>16</sup> Evelyn J., *Acetaria, or a Discourse of Sallets* 2nd ed. (London: 1706 [1699]), A3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Evelyn J., *Sylva*, B1<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> The term "hortulan" is first used by John Evelyn in a letter to Browne as an adjective meaning 'of or pertaining to gardens'. The context of this coinage is discussed below.

<sup>19</sup> Cowley A., "Of Agriculture" in *Several Discourses by way of Essays in Verse and Prose*; and "The Garden", in *Works*, 101 and 117 respectively.

<sup>20</sup> B[eale] J., *Herefordshire Orchards, a Pattern for All England* (London: 1657) 40, 49.

<sup>21</sup> Evelyn J., *Pomona* (London: 1670) 2.

of it can be produced per acre; by making beer from its grain, on the other hand, the nation stupidly 'drinks its very *Bread-corn*!'<sup>22</sup>

The propagation of English fruit as a straightforward agricultural topic in the sixteenth century was enhanced in the seventeenth by refinements in the art of grafting, inoculating, and hybridizing fruit trees; at the same time, the apple itself (and by extension other cultivable fruits) had by the mid-seventeenth century become a transcendent symbol in several coexistent and intertwined politico-religious ideologies. The medical, dietetical, military, eschatological, technological, economic, and political in many combinations animate the arborists, vegetabilists, and orchardists. Writers of simpling texts and of hortulan guides advocate a return to natural cures and foods as an antidote to the meat-heavy and sugar-saturated diet of the prosperous classes, a regimen superior to and more virtuous than the compounded Galenic preparations of the physicians, a fallen medicine because mixed rather than the pure, herbal medicines of wild animals.<sup>23</sup> Because 'there was no Sarcophagie before the flood', Browne decides that 'vegetable aliments' preserved the immediate descendants of Adam 'unto longer life' (*PE* 1.265); and in this vein, still smarting three years after the catastrophic Battle of the Medway, John Evelyn argues for a kind of detox diet of sallets and other wholesome green things, nutriment which would 'recall the world' to the pristine sustenance of our first parents, and thereby strengthen and purify the population in expectation of judgement – or if not judgement, the Dutch.

Proponents of utile fruit-growing were allied to both political extremes, and are heard as Anglican, establishment voices and as non-conformist and politically oppositional ones. On the one hand there are the practical writings of social reformers like Samuel Hartlib (c. 1600–1662), radical Puritans like Ralph Austen (that polemical gardener and champion of English fruits for health and wealth among the godly), and Walter Blith (1605–1654), relentless Cromwellian advocate of high agricultural yields; on the other there are the equally practical but politically mandarin works of John Evelyn, Abraham Cowley, Robert Sharrock (1630–1684), and Joseph Blagrave (1610–?1682), as well as the collection of genteel receipts by Kenelm Digby (1603–1665), whose horticultural sentiments are probably bound up with the royalist

<sup>22</sup> Blith W., *English Improver* 126.

<sup>23</sup> Goodman G., *Fall of Man* 96–97.

promulgation of a natural reflorescence following on the restoration of the king.<sup>24</sup> All writers, of whatever political or religious stripe, praise trees, and in particular the apple, as the way to national prosperity, the quelling of sedition, and the defeat of foreign adversaries.

These admonitions are connected to the urgent millenarian sense of needful purification: the Garden of Eden, after all, is shortly to be seen again on earth, this time happily and conveniently situated in the British Isles. Writers across the political and religious spectrum – William Coles (1626–1662), John Ray (1627–1705), Ralph Austen, and Thomas Savile (*fl.* 1606–1611), among many – all invoke the second Adam, the simpler-orchardist-gardener whose planting is to ready the world for the millennium: Walter Blith, consciously adopting the plain language of the countryman, impatiently argues that ‘this nation might be made the paradise of the *world*, if we can but bring *ingenuity* into fashion’.<sup>25</sup> This rich blend of millenarian, physico-theological, georgic, and politico-economic thinking informed almost every writer on fruit. For all of them, the labour and industry of planting and tending is explicitly or latently an act of worship, the respectful, stewardly task of tending God’s creation, bringing it into a perfection it might not achieve unaided.

Whatever their ideological complexity, most of the works of the ciderists and vegetabilists are intensely practical, with exact instructions for tilling, fertilizing, siting, inoculating, and grafting fruit trees, as well as designs for cider-presses, ploughs, and water-mills, schedules for harvesting, and advice about the best species for the making of cider. Most of these books also contain recipes for cider, ciderkin or water-cider, demock, verjuice, pearmaine cider, foxwhelp cider, and perry, with some ranging into apple-wines, vinegars, cordials, liquors, and brandies produced from berries and other orchard fruits. Regional cider specialisms are constantly rehearsed, Pomona herself taking ‘many a deep-fetcht draught’<sup>26</sup> in the great cider counties of the West Country, and species of cider-apple – Redstrake and Gennet-Moyle – celebrated as the *non pareils* of the orchard. Many of the treatise-writers advise underplanting

<sup>24</sup> Cowley A., *Works*, 98–104; Sharrock R., *The History of the Propagation and Improvement of Vegetables* (Oxford: 1660); Blagrave J., *The Epitome of the Whole Art of Husbandry* (London: 1669); and Digby K., *The Closet of the Eminently Learned Sir Kenelme Digby Kt.* (London: 1669).

<sup>25</sup> Blith W., *English Improver* 126.

<sup>26</sup> Drayton M., *Poly-Olbion*, ed. J.W. Hebel (Oxford: 1961) 293, l74.

orchards with all manner of edible herbs and green stuff, not only as an anti-costive, as Thomas Tryon (1634–1703) urges,<sup>27</sup> but also to spare God's creatures in the interests of kindness, our better health, and the re-enactment of the paradisial diet, 'the original, and genuine Food of all Mankind from the Creation'.<sup>28</sup> A vegetable diet, says Evelyn, must be 'compar'd with the Shambles-Filth and *nidor*, Blood, and Cruelty; [...] all the World were *Eaters*, and *Composers of Sallets* in its best and brightest Age'.<sup>29</sup> He digresses at this point with worldwide evidence on the benefits conferred by roughage. 'Every Hedge affords a *Sallet*', he concludes, marrying domestic and digestive economy.

Browne's essay on plants in scripture was, according to John Evelyn, addressed to Nicholas Bacon, the dedicatee of *The Garden of Cyrus*, a man whose own noble origins were a great deal more 'new-set' in the genealogical garden than Browne admits (1.177). The tract greatly interested Evelyn himself: the author of discourses on trees and salads was first in correspondence with Browne in 1659, accepting advice and information on gardens for his massive *Elysium Britannicum*; and slightly later, receiving Browne's tract on garlands as well as anecdotes of tremendous trees in East Anglia for *Sylva* (1664). In the first phase of their correspondence Evelyn describes his work-in-progress, the enormous history of gardens which never actually appeared in the elaborate form outlined in his letter.<sup>30</sup>

The letter is largely taken up with a discursive outline of the proposed *Elysium Britannicum*.<sup>31</sup> But this is prefaced by an eloquent philosophy of gardens and gardeners. Evelyn disparages those 'Cockney [*i.e.* 'affected', 'urban'] Gardens and plotts, which appear like Gardens of past board and March pane, and smell more of paynt than of flowers and verdure'. Instead, he proclaims, 'our drift is a noble, princely, and universall Elysium'. The air and atmosphere of such a garden, he says, promotes human virtue and sanctity, prompts 'contemplative and philosophicall Enthusiasme', and prepares us to converse with angels.

<sup>27</sup> Tryon T., *A New Art of Brewing Beer* (London: 1690) 16–17.

<sup>28</sup> Evelyn J., *Acetaria* 4.

<sup>29</sup> Evelyn J., *Acetaria* 120.

<sup>30</sup> John Evelyn to Thomas Browne, 28 January 1660 in *Works* ed G. Keynes, 4.272–279.

<sup>31</sup> A condensed plan of this was published as an appendix to *Acetaria*. The incomplete *Elysium Britannicum* did not appear in Evelyn's lifetime; see Evelyn J., *Elysium Britannicum, or The Royal Gardens*, ed. J.E. Ingram (Philadelphia, PA: 2001).

Evelyn's imagined garden emulates the philosophical gardens of Epicurus and Democritus.<sup>32</sup> He calls not only for the

famous Garden Heroes, but a society of the *Paradisi Cultores*, persons of antient simplicity, paradisean and hortulan saints, to be a society of learned and ingenious men, such as Dr Browne, by whome we might hope to redeeme the tyme that has bin lost, in pursuing vulgar errors.<sup>33</sup>

This hortulan saint (or one of 'our [...] *Brothers of the Sallet*')<sup>34</sup> was a refined cousin of the bluffer countryman-farmer whom Gervase Markham (1568?–1637) addresses when he declares that 'the husbandman shall practise courtesy';<sup>35</sup> and of a host of improvers and farmers beginning (in England) with John Fitzherbert's books of husbandry and surveying (1523).<sup>36</sup> He is a 'garden hero' like Solomon, Cyrus, and Alexander, who 'chang'd their *Scepters* for the *Spade*, and their *Purple* for the Gardiner's *Apron*';<sup>37</sup> he is an Adamic emulator, planting and tending the divine bounty; and he is a learned after-Adam, whose 'appelising' in scholarly and experimental enterprises reconvenes the broken knowledge of innocence. And he is the antidote to *armorum strepitus*, the clashing of arms, and promoter of 'the hortulane pleasures [...] in the ruines of our miserable yet dearest country'.<sup>38</sup> Evelyn proposed this hortulan brotherhood within a year or so of the publication of *The Garden of Cyrus*, and in naming Browne as one of his *paradisi cultores* he seems to recognize that Browne's 'garden discourse' promotes 'hortulane pleasures' with the idea and etymology of paradise.<sup>39</sup>

*The Garden of Cyrus* is a brief essay consisting of five chapters and a preface. Subtitled *The Quincunx*, it sets out to notice figures of five in the form of the lozenge or quincunx, essentially a diamond-shaped parallelogram (a rhombus) described by four corner-points and a central point. The fantastical range of quincunxes – in ancient Greek

<sup>32</sup> The ancient Greeks, 'being of a vigorous, and active humour, establish't their Philosophy, in [...] *Walks*, and *Porches*, and *Gardens*': Sprat T., *A History of the Royal Society* (London: 1667) 7.

<sup>33</sup> John Evelyn to Thomas Browne, in *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.275.

<sup>34</sup> Evelyn J., *Acetaria* 33.

<sup>35</sup> Markham G., *The English Husbandman* (London: 1635) 6.

<sup>36</sup> For a history of such works, see McRae A., "Husbandry Manuals and the Language of Agrarian Improvement", in Leslie M. – Taylor T. (eds.), *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land* (Leicester: 1992) 35–62.

<sup>37</sup> Evelyn J., *Acetaria* [A5'].

<sup>38</sup> John Evelyn to Thomas Browne, in *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.275.

<sup>39</sup> Evelyn adopted Browne's "quincunx" as a garden term both in *Acetaria* and in *Pomona*, where he refers to it as 'the ornament of Cyrus' (*Pomona* 20).

bedsprings, in the skin of the pineapple, in Egyptian mosquito-nets, in the reception of light on the retina – makes free with the entire natural and artificial world but is dominated by botanical examples which flourish particularly in the middle (or third) chapter. The almost overwhelming array of vegetable quincunxes in this chapter displays Browne's wide botanical learning, a practical expertise which leads him away from the subtle quincuncial order and into a substantial digression on the embryology of seeds. It is a fascinating passage for what it shows of Browne's extremely exact experimental and observational knowledge of local flora and of plant reproduction; and even more so as an infraction against the strict numerology of the quincunx. This textual disorder (the digression into vegetation) attuned to natural disorder (unmanaged plant germination) invites us to consider the whole of the essay in terms of array and disarray.

Browne's paradise is introduced with a date: he chose to sign his dedicatory preface to *The Garden of Cyrus* on May Day (1 May) 1658, and he could hardly have selected a more verdant or irrepressible holiday to which to attach the essay's generative vigour. The date introduces a potentially disorderly idea, encompassed in the holiday practices of May. Near the end of the essay, however, he proclaims that 'all things began in order, so shall they end' (1.226). What are we to make of an essay which commences with the suspended order of May and ends in divine order? With what kinds of meanings did Browne invest his odd foray into figures of five and generative activity in the green world? In discovering quincunxes throughout the natural and artificial world he discovers a reassuring pattern and continuity amid apparent randomness, and one way to read *Cyrus* would be as a template, an *u finita* or 'rule without exception' capable of mastering the infinite variety of the creation.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, as Browne himself says in the preface, the rarity of such generalities in nature gives him licence venially to 'admit of collaterall truths', to take 'wide liberty', and to 'erre by great example' (1.176). Thus, although he allows that botanical and other maxims will hold unless 'intolerably overballanced by exceptions', the wide liberty of his proceeding in the essay itself claims exactly that: exceptions or at least digressions, which wander away from the quincuncial subject.

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<sup>40</sup> Such a reading has been put forward by Halley J.E., "Sir Thomas Browne's *The Garden of Cyrus* and the Real Character", *English Literary Renaissance* 15 (1985) 100–121.

His prefatory observations on strict pattern, rule, and order in nature introduce thoughts of symmetry and harmony, as well as their antithetical, overbalancing exceptions. It is this contention between orderliness and disarray which governs *The Garden of Cyrus*.

With that contention in mind – between pattern and chaos, symmetry and randomness, obedience and infraction – May 1658 was an extraordinary moment to be making such hopeful sallies into the subject of order and growth. Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) was still refusing the crown and in steeply declining health, the legal system was in tatters, tax revolts threatened, and the army and Parliament were squaring off against each other. The bleak probability of an anarchic collapse in civil order must have been clear to all who followed the ruined affairs of their troubled nation. Public dispute over social practices such as May Day contributed to the climate of antagonism: for the last half-century Maying rites, together with many others, had been criticized, heavily curtailed, or suppressed altogether under the Protectorate and its antecedents. That argument partly rested on opposed interpretations of social order. Probably descended from earth and fertility rites, the May games and customs in their medieval and early-modern form licensed access to what Robert Herrick (1591–1674) called ‘cleanly-wantonesse’: budding boys and girls would fetch in May by going into the woods to gather green boughs and (sometimes) engage there in games of sexual initiation.<sup>41</sup> The feudal proprieties and oversight of such communal, rural rites, as Leah Marcus has argued, probably managed and fostered various couplings which benefited the young, landless labouring class, and promoted a stable agricultural base and a quiet community.<sup>42</sup>

But, it was claimed, ‘unyoakt youth’ was in fact engaged in ‘routs and wilde pleasure’:<sup>43</sup> more maids went into the woods than returned. Herrick’s ameliorative conception of this ‘cleanly’ May was not shared by less lenient Anglicans or by conservative Puritans, a disagreement neatly illustrated by the dispute between Piers and Palinode in Spenser’s *May Eclogue*. Depending on the polemicist, Maying customs, including the maypole and the sexual license and other misbehaviours that it was

<sup>41</sup> “The Argument of the Book” (5, ll. 5–6); “Corinna’s Gone A-Maying” (67, ll. 43–44); “The Maypole” (239), all in Herrick R., *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: 1956).

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of Puritan attempts to suppress Maying customs, see Marcus L.S., *The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell, and the Defence of Old Holiday Pastimes* (Chicago, IL: 1986).

<sup>43</sup> Eliot J., *Poems* (London: 1658) 105–106.

thought to prosper, were claimed to have originated in or to replicate either Israelite or Graeco-Roman idol-worship, the Roman Floralia (an orgiastic festival), or the Catholic Church itself. The defence of Maying customs, officially initiated by James VI & I (1566–1625) in *The Book of Sports* (1618), and reiterated by Charles I in *The Kings Maiesties Declaration to His Subjects Concerning lawfull Sports* (1633), became a point of struggle between the party which allied Cavaliers and the culturally conservative who espoused continuity and wished to protect if only symbolically the old ways of ‘merry England’, and their antagonists, the party of ‘Puritanes and precise people’ who wished to purge the perceived anarchy, violence, and debauchery of the observances.<sup>44</sup> The embattled May rites were comprehensively in retreat as early as 1619, when, as an anonymous satirist complained:

[...] the summer-poles were overthowne,  
And all good sports and merriments decayd,  
How times and men are chang'd.<sup>45</sup>

Charles I’s declaration explicitly commanded that ‘our good people be not disturbed, letted, or discouraged [...] from having of May-Games, Whitson Ales, and Morris-dances, and the setting up of Maypoles & other sports therewith used’.<sup>46</sup> This royal fiat was of course dismissed by the Puritan ascendancy, and the May Day ‘smouching and slabbering’ complained of in 1583 by Philip Stubbes (c. 1555–?1610) were finally outlawed by Parliament in 1644.<sup>47</sup> The May rites survived through the 1650s at least in the poetry of Lovelace and Marvell, even if they were significantly curbed in reality.

<sup>44</sup> Charles I, *The Kings Maiesties Declaration to His Subjects Concerning Lazefull Sports* (London: 1633) 4.

<sup>45</sup> Anon., *Pasquils Palinodia* [attrib. Nicholas Breton or William Fennor] (London: 1619) B3. The word “May” may almost have been a code-word for royalist sympathizers. The poet, translator and angler Charles Cotton (1630–1687) announces to Izaak Walton (1593–1683): if ‘we live to see another May/ We’ll recompense an Age of these/ Foul days in one fine fishing day’: Cotton C., “The Retirement”, in *Poems on Several Occasions* (London: 1689) 116. The date of this poem is unknown, but it is probably later than the 1650s, and could refer merely to the old age of the writer and the recipient. Angling as a holiday pastime, however, is naturally associated with May, when the trout begin to rise, and thus is the moment of the opening of *The Compleat Angler* (London: 1653).

<sup>46</sup> Charles I, *Lawfull Sports* 4.

<sup>47</sup> Stubbes P., *Anatomy of Abuses* (London: 1583) [98v]. See also Whistler L., *The English Festivals* (London: 1947) 138; and Hutton R., *Merry England* 28–29.

I suggest that Browne *chose* the first of May for his letter to Nicholas Bacon because, with the May Day dispute current, it is impossible to imagine his assigning that particular date to *The Garden of Cyrus* innocently or randomly. The essay was in fact probably composed rather earlier in the year, in March by internal evidence,<sup>48</sup> and the preface, with all the ceremonial heft that such remarks traditionally carry, may have been dated according to the demands of the form rather than with special regard for calendrical accuracy.<sup>49</sup> It is a suspicion reinforced by the fact that May is the fifth month in the almanac (though not in the Julian Calendar), which may have had a subsidiary numerological appeal in keeping with the quincunx itself.<sup>50</sup> Browne does not seem to have been much given to direct or partisan statements, and his politics seem to have been conventionally but not radically conservative. It would be too much, therefore, to insist on his May Day preface as a signal of energetic solidarity with the royalist side. Rather, with this date he cunningly directs us to the penumbra of associations it carries, and with it he introduces his generative theme.

*The Garden of Cyrus*'s subject is generation. It opens with a reference to Persian orchards, and couched in its wealth of botanical observations, it is clearly cognate with the orchard and garden tracts which were so abundant at mid-century; but how could it have signalled to Evelyn that its author was a like-minded cultivator of ideas and of plants? The society of *paradisi cultores* of Evelyn's letter is, like Sprat's and Cowley's adumbration of the Royal Society itself, an idea grounded in civil intel-

<sup>48</sup> Browne's note on his closing reference to the Hyades says that he was writing late at night in early March (1.226).

<sup>49</sup> On the significance of the early-modern preface, see Dunn K., *Pretexts of Authority: The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford, CA: 1994); and, for Browne's own use of prefaces, see Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early-Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) chapter 1. The prefaces to *Urne-Buriall* and *The Garden of Cyrus* in the first edition of 1658 were probably written very shortly before publication, although this does not rule out deliberate artifice in the May Day dating. The Thomason copy of this edition has 'May' written next to the publication date on the title page, and since Thomason was generally scrupulous in noting the month in many of his volumes, this is probably reliable. Samuel Hartlib had received a copy, and was recommending it to Robert Boyle, by 13 May 1658. I am indebted to Kathryn Murphy for discussing with me bibliographical evidence in the first edition.

<sup>50</sup> In the Julian Calendar, which was not to be officially replaced by the Gregorian in England until September 1752, May would have been the third month rather than the fifth. However, with various calendrical years simultaneously in operation (the ecclesiastical, the legal, the academic, for example), the most commonplace sense of the year's commencement – as shown in *The Shephearde's Calendar* – would have been the more demotic almanac, whose first month was usually January.

lectual exchange; and Evelyn particularly likes to think of cultivated fruits as ‘civil and ingenuous’, and opposed to ‘wildings’ of which he has little or nothing to say.<sup>51</sup> He must, therefore, have noticed at once that Browne’s conception of the vegetable world is far from any sustained notion of cultivation. What little Browne says of the orchard quincunx we know from the ciderists and arborists: it allows sufficient space, light, and nourishment for each tree, prevents proximal infection, and encourages aeration by the winds. ‘By this way of plantation’, Browne concludes briskly, ‘[the ancients] encreased the number of their trees, which they lost in *Quaternio*’s and square-orders’ (1.212). This is virtually Browne’s only word on its practical application, and even these scant few lines in Chapter IV on orchard plantations keep digressing into considerations of ‘low’ and wild plants: although he begins with figs and olives in their careful rows, sea holly, liquorice, sea rush, hedgerow elms, onions, and mint quickly invade the discussion like weeds, and there ends any pretence of agricultural utility.

As a May Day essay, in other words, this approach to generation abandons any practical interest in the ‘elegant ordination of vegetables’ (1.192) and instead pitches the severe orderliness of the quincuncially planted orchard against the perceived vegetative chaos implicitly linked to the purportedly irregular May Day practices; it pitches regulated, lawful fruition against the burgeoning of ‘salvage’ wildings. *Cyrus*’s few specific and practical remarks in this line on the plantation of fruit are effaced by the digression in Chapter Three on the nature of vegetable generation – by nightshade, scurvy-grass, mandrakes, henbane, not to mention bees, hens, and moths – and by further discussion of plant morphology, heliotropism, and further *quaeres*. The very notion of the quincunx is all but abandoned in the fourth chapter so that these overpowering, cleanly-wanton digressions on growing things are themselves so rampant as to seem the primary subject of the essay. The abbreviated, derivative remarks about orchard plantation are sidelined and seem merely impertinent. His *quaeres* and observations – on epiphytes, hydroponic germander, and aquatic plants in the oceans, to name a few – feel random by contrast to his strictly curtailed discussion of the quincuncial orchard. Tree-rings, pine needles, fenny plants, ‘hot’ sweet calamus and crowsfoot, and biting persicaria (vulgarly known, as he carefully records, as ‘arsesmart’), these among many phenomena

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<sup>51</sup> Evelyn J., *Pomona* 22.

are a generation of examples which enact the generation of plant life. This is a Maying section, a promiscuous and untrammelled botanical *florilegium*.

Cowley would praise the Royal Society a few years later for delving into nature's 'privatest recess/Of her imperceptible littleness', where she writes her works in 'her smallest hand',<sup>52</sup> and *The Garden of Cyrus* does exactly this. In its resolution into thousands of minute vegetable instances, each potentially subordinate to the larger quincuncial structure of whole orchards, the decussation demonstrates that the vital impulse in nature is constantly exemplified.<sup>53</sup> Browne dallies briefly with actual orchards, actual fruit trees; but to the relentlessly utile instructions for grafting and budding reiterated by almost every seventeenth-century fruit-writer, Browne returns an extravagant plenitude of learned observations and conclusions, often about plants with no obvious agricultural or medicinal value. There is nothing here of Evelyn's 'noble, princely Elysium'; nor could it be farther from what one Thomas Langford calls 'the plain *Dunstable* way to the propagating of *Fruit-trees*, without [...] a *wilderness* of words'.<sup>54</sup> Instead, *Cyrus* is a completely distinct, botanically technical 'garden discourse' which shows little interest in the art of planting, much more in the natural fact of growing. And yet the title, *The Garden of Cyrus or, The Quincuncial Lozenge, or Net-Work Plantations of the Ancients, Artificially, Naturally, Mystically considered. With Sundry Observations*, hardly hints at the plant biology within. It is that masterfully bathetic afterthought in the title, '*With Sundry Observations*' that tells the real story of the essay, which proves to be a veritable clamour of reports and assertions, almost none of them on the network plantations of the ancients. 'Gardens were before gardeners', he reminds us – the vegetable kingdom is the product of the third day of creation. The paralipptic self-deprecations of his dedicatory epistle to Nicholas Bacon – 'we write no Herball [...] We pretend not to [...] erect a new *Phytology*' (1.175) – mask a catalogue of experimental and observational data which rivals anything by the fruit writers; so too, Browne's mystical sense of bountiful and miraculous life is as spiritual a use of a garden as those proposed

<sup>52</sup> Cowley A., "To the Royal Society" in *Works* 41.

<sup>53</sup> See Glacken C.J., *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: 1967) 392–398 for a discussion of this kind of Platonism in seventeenth-century physico-theology.

<sup>54</sup> Langford T., *Plain and Full Instructions to raise all sorts of Fruit-trees*, 2nd ed. (London: 1696) A4[v].

by Hartlib or Austen. There is, in short, much to suggest that Browne is engaging in several conversations – the technically botanical, the mystical, and the scholarly. In what character, then, are we to read *The Garden of Cyrus*? That Browne – exemplary plant morphologist, medical simpler, and expert in plant generation – was pretty well versed in the art of grafting is clear from his comments on the subject in a section of the tract on Scriptural plants where he discusses the propagation of olive trees, and from extensive notes in his papers where he even discusses the kind of transspecific grafting which might have interested Austen in his most spiritual, resurrectionary mode.<sup>55</sup> But, emphatically, he does not intend *The Garden of Cyrus* as practical botany, even though his own professional interest in medicinal herbs, and his acknowledgement of ‘the diet prescribed in Paradise and the state of innocence’ (PE 1.266) might have prompted from him a sympathetic fruit and vegetable tract, or some sort of herbal. Instead, as if rejecting his own practice in the scriptural tract in trying to identify the forbidden fruit etymologically, he wishes to ‘moderat[e] the study of names, and me[re] nomenclature of plants’ (1.226). Producing instead neither a herbal nor a new phytology, he has absolutely nothing to contribute to the enhancement of the English national good through improved arboriculture; he carefully disclaims any expertise (‘I [...] was never master of any considerable garden’, he tells Nicholas Bacon (1.175)); nor does he aim at gardening as a form of aggrandizement in the manner of Francis Bacon’s essay “Of Gardens”, or Evelyn’s *Elysium Britannicum*. *The Garden of Cyrus* is not about gardens at all.

As deeply unlike the orchard manuals or hortulan proposals as it is, *The Garden of Cyrus* is an explicit paradise tract. The felicitous coinage of the Persians ‘unto whom we owe the very name of paradise’ marries, as many before Browne had noticed, the pure ‘botanical bravery’ of gardens with the notion of enclosure which characterized the first garden. And the remnants of that paradise still linger in the world. It is everywhere, Browne says in his preface; it survives as a *hortus paradi-sus* of learning as well as of vegetation; but it is a paradise well-tilled, and the propagation of new intellectual plants is difficult. ‘The Field of knowledge’, he complains, ‘hath been so traced, it is hard to spring

<sup>55</sup> 3.26–27; 374–378. Browne says that near Norwich ‘an oake growtheth upon the head of a pollard [...] probably by some Acorn falling & fastning upon it [...] I could shewe you a branch of the same willowe wh. shoothes forth [...] both willowe & oake twigs & leaves upon it’ (3.378).

any thing new' (1.175).<sup>56</sup> Thus the striking disclaimers of the preface and the essay, in which he seems to denigrate the merits of his own production as but 'low delights, and poor manipes', and avoids claiming more than is modest with dismissive locutions ('we shall decline', 'nor shall we urge', and 'we will not revive') are, as I have argued elsewhere, partly playful, and partly signals of digressions resisted which alert us to the profound, unresisted and irresistible botanical digression of Chapter Three.<sup>57</sup>

According to Xenophon, Cyrus the Elder 'brought the treasures of the field into rule and circumscription' (1.180), and this is a good phrase with which to describe the project of the orchardists and arborists. But Browne seems to dismiss that project out of hand when he remarks that there is little 'after the experience of fifteen hundred years, left [...] for future discovery in Botanicall Agriculture' (1.184). The ancients clearly knew all there was to know, making the orchard manuals of his own day almost pointless. Indeed, if *Urne-Buriall* is an enraptured rejection of the antiquarian project to recall the past, *The Garden of Cyrus* might in its quite different way also be proposing itself as a tract of abnegation, one which admits the fruitlessness (or at least the paltriness) of cider tracts, agricultural systems, and quincuncial patterns compared to the spontaneous and ungovernable fecundity of unassisted nature. In other words, if the orchardists and gardenists believe themselves to be repairing by *scientia* the brokenness of fallen nature, or at least husbanding it as part of the duty of fallenness, Browne replies that nature is too powerful for our interventions. In support of this he springs almost 130 useless, spontaneous, non-arable, misbehaving trees, weeds, and hedgerow sports, vegetation obeying no gardener and no demand for utility. Against this 130, a scant 28 cultivable fruit trees, nut trees, garden flowers, kitchen-garden plants, or arable grains are even named in *The Garden*, which is otherwise notably free of apples, pears, quinces, or sallets, free of any of the carefully tended

<sup>56</sup> The *OED* does not include 'trace' as a verb for tilling, but there is probably some such meaning in Browne's use of the word, which sorts with fields and the springing of vegetation. 'Trace' is perhaps a synecdoche developed from the plough's harness or traces.

<sup>57</sup> For a full discussion of this digression, see Preston C., *Thomas Browne* chap. 6.

species which so delight the grafters, planters, and inoculators of the English New Elysium.<sup>58</sup>

Where the political-theologians Matthew Hale (1609–1676), Thomas Burnet, and others would argue for ‘superintendent cultivation’ to restrain the spontaneous, robust wildness and disorder of active nature, a disorder which if allowed full rein might promiscuously mix land and sea, mountains and plain, cultivated and wild,<sup>59</sup> and where the horticulturalists in their designs for plenty observed a managed distinction between the ornamental garden, the agrarian orchards and fields, and the relatively ‘salvage’ woodlands,<sup>60</sup> Browne considers plants remarkable because of their unsponsored and untilled rampancy, for their unruly spontaneity, an unruliness that nevertheless demonstrates figure and plan in quincuncial and other patterns. Seeds and sprouts seem to him to get on with the business of life despite his experiments on them, to display mystical quincuncial signatures, to prosper precisely because no man has intervened in their growth. And it is not only the quincunxes he finds in the water osmund and the globe thistle, but vegetable proliferation itself which forms an enormous, pandemic signature, a proof of the survival of paradise. The titanic verdure of the world, represented for him by insignificant plants, and by their very small products – seeds and kernels, mainly – makes a laughing-stock of herbals, tree manuals and orchard advisoes, much as *Urne-Buriall* more plaintively reminds us of the futility of memory.

*The Garden of Cyrus* would perhaps have distressed an earnest orchardist like Ralph Austen, with its energetic caper through a wilderness of green growing things, and its demonstration that the figure of five inheres, like paradise, everywhere, without reference to the careful plantations of the fruiterer. To the applied arts of orchards and vegetable plots with their ‘solid and useful knowledge’<sup>61</sup> Browne replies,

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<sup>58</sup> In a rough count, only the rose of Sharon, tulip, peony, and sunflower are mentioned; with mustard, peas, beans, barley, oats, wheat, and rye; and cherry, plum, vine, fig, walnut, and olive.

<sup>59</sup> Hale M., *The Primitive Origination of Mankind* (London: 1677) 370; Burnet T., *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (London: 1689). Three of Hale’s works were in Browne’s library, though not this one; Hale also presided over the witchcraft trial in 1664 at which Browne provided expert witness.

<sup>60</sup> See Hunt J.D., “Hortulan Affairs” in Greengrass M. – Leslie M. – Raylor T. (eds.), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge: 1994) 321–342, here 330.

<sup>61</sup> Evelyn J., *Acetaria* A3r.

‘Gardens were before gardeners’. If the May theme of *Cyrus* responds latently to the rebarbative and disorderly political atmosphere of England by alluding to folkloric and communal continuity, it may also be responding to the strictures of the Protectorate and its social and religious proscriptions by delineating a natural energy immune to control. Browne’s verdure, like May rites themselves, represents both order and disorder, propriety and wantonness. From a writer who first pleaded for a ‘soft’, ‘flexible’, and ‘tropical’ reading of *Religio Medici*, expectation of a black and white response to contemporary political turmoil, and even to garden manuals, would be unreasonable. Instead, *The Garden of Cyrus*’s richly vegetated natural history is a complex, even obliquely meddlesome, angle on verities which were offering to shape England’s political and its green landscapes.

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PART IV  
THE TURBULENCE OF THE TIME



‘IN THE TIME OF THE LATE CIVIL WARS’:   
POST-RESTORATION BROWNE AND THE POLITICAL  
MEMORY OF *REPERTORIUM*

Kevin Killeen

1. *Browne in the Time of the Exclusion Crisis*

Browne’s *Repertorium*, his record of the monuments of Norwich Cathedral, is a work that has received only passing interest, its functional antiquarianism being seen as, at best, a poor relation of *Urne-Buriall* (*Hydriotaphia*). But *Repertorium*, this essay argues, serves a number of purposes besides its mere dutiful cataloguing of the city cathedral. There are personal and political investments in the work that emerge most fully and curiously in tandem with Browne’s evidently wide knowledge of political affairs during the period. His treatment of the cathedral’s history is firstly, of course, the melancholy record of its destruction, but it is less a lament for lost beauty than for the good order associated with ecclesiastical hierarchy. *Repertorium* is simultaneously a record of iconoclasm, of Browne’s personal relations over his years in Norwich and a geography of endowments connected to the cathedral.

A persistent view of Browne has held him to be uninterested in contemporary events, but this is evidently not the case. Browne’s correspondence is thick with political reference, with speculation on parliamentary affairs and the king’s prerogative, with news of local militia and with accounts of electoral shenanigans and results. This interest is not, however, sustained consistently over the twenty years for which we have substantial correspondence, but is rather clustered around two periods of national crisis – first, in the early years of the Restoration and again during the political upheaval surrounding the Exclusion question. The completion of *Repertorium* coincides with this second outburst of political reference in Browne’s letters to his son, Edward (1644–1708), in revealing contrast to those of the previous decade. Their correspondence in the late 1660s refers primarily to Edward’s extensive travels, while the letters from the early 1670s, when Edward had taken up a post as a physician in London, deal largely with medical matters: treatments, prescriptions, anomalies and, on occasion, the

sort of fatherly bundle that Browne was wont to send: 'I have enclosed the ureter & *vesica* or bladder, such as it is, of carp which wee had this day'.<sup>1</sup> In December 1678, contiguous paragraphs deal with the death of Edward's child and the anatomy of spinal marrow in fish.<sup>2</sup> But from February 1679, there is an abrupt change in the subject matter and tone of the correspondence, a welling up of interest in contemporary events. This political focus is sustained and occupies many of the 60 or so letters over the following year.

Browne's comments range widely across national and foreign affairs, into the religious politics of the era and the intricacies of Norfolk politics. He discusses, for example, the evidence in the trials surrounding the Popish Plot and the accusations of Titus Oates (1649–1705), which Browne appears to believe:

Most do much wonder at the playne proofes in the late triall of the last 6 prisoners, which I believe will be printed within a fortnight, the concurrent testimonies and proofes and circumstances, makes Oates his testimony Authentick and still of more validity, which may prove the worse for the Lords, who are like to descend most upon witnesses abroad as these did.<sup>3</sup>

The following day, Browne makes detailed and informed references to the fighting in Scotland, but doubts the reliability of the 'coffie & common news letters', though he adds that 'a little more time will better informe us of that business'. He is certain the English forces will be able to subdue the Scots, who, nevertheless 'are very tenacious of the protestant religion & have entertained feares & jealousies of designes to introduce the Roman from their observations of the affayres in England'.<sup>4</sup> He continues with speculation on the problems that would

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Keynes's edition of Browne's work helpfully includes a photograph of the still extant specimen. T. Browne, Letter to Edward Browne, 2 June 1676, in *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) 4.64. Subsequent references to Browne will be in text, except where further information is required in the footnotes, and to this edition. All letters cited are, unless otherwise indicated, to his son Edward, whose replies are not in Keynes' edition, but can be found in the first volume of Browne T., *The Works of Thomas Browne*, ed. S. Wilkin, 4 vols (London: 1835–1836). Thanks to Ralph Houlbrooke and John Spurr, both of whom have offered me their expertise on a number of historical points in this essay.

<sup>2</sup> 27 December 1678, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.88.

<sup>3</sup> 20 June 1679, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.118. See also the letter of 28 April 1679, 4.103.

<sup>4</sup> 28 June 1679, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.119.

arise should a parliament be called and then prorogued and how this would fuel Scottish fears.

Browne's attention to the looming political crisis is maintained over the following year. He sends his son a copy of *A speech lately made by a noble peer of the realm* (London: 1681) by Anthony Ashley Cooper, First Earl of Shaftesbury (1621–1683). He is evidently outraged with the speech and complains about the abuse of parliamentary privilege, that

there are many passages in it little to the honour & reputation of the King. Though the commons howse bee free & the howse of Lords also for what they say within their walls, yet [it] is much that their speeches should bee printed & sent about.<sup>5</sup>

A little later, Browne laments the financial restrictions being placed on the king by parliament and draws a surely inescapable moral:

I am sorry to find that the King of England is fayne to reduce his howsehold expences to twelve thousand pounds p. annum, especially hee having a farre greater revenue then any of his predecessors. God keepe all honest men from pinching want.<sup>6</sup>

This is, plainly, not the voice of a man secluded from events, as Browne has been depicted, and his interest is sustained and wide.

More important still in the production of *Repertorium*, and in the politically inflected reading of the work which I give in this essay, is Browne's engagement with and knowledge of local politics. The fiercely contested Norfolk elections of 1679 seemed to local commentators to have left the county in a more perilous condition than at any time since the Civil Wars. Browne comments that '[t]here is like to bee very great endeavouring for the places, wch will still keepe open divisions wch were to wide before, & make it a countrey of Guelphs & Ghibellines'.<sup>7</sup> The comparison of Norwich politics to Dante's Florence, riven by internecine violence and strife, is all the more notable coming from what is thought of as the generally untroubled pen of Thomas Browne. Following a bitterly fought February election and complaints of illegality, petitions were made to Parliament to declare the results void, the details of which Browne reports carefully:

<sup>5</sup> 5 January 1681, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.177.

<sup>6</sup> 28 February 1681, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.185.

<sup>7</sup> 25 April 1679, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.102.

Sir John Hobart complayned of some illegall proceedings in the election, and petitiond the howse about it & delivered my Lord Yarmoth my Lord Lietenant's letter [...] wch was construed as a thrating letter and sett the howse in such a heat that they had like to have been presently dismissed the howse.<sup>8</sup>

After the May election of parliamentary representatives, the celebrations were intense, as the victors, Sir John Hobart (1628–1683) and Neville Catelyn (1634–1702), ‘were caryed in chayres about the market place after eleven a clock, with trumpets and torches’.<sup>9</sup> Browne watched events with a Dr Brady, who had come to Norwich bringing ‘18 or 19 from Cambridge, schollars who were freeholders in Norfolk’ to add to the vote, while his companion, Thomas Hare (*fl.* 1658–1693), brought 400 voters into the municipality.<sup>10</sup> Accusations of election rigging and the recriminations upon the conduct of the vote were fierce, and the mayoralty refused to accept or endorse the results of the election. Parliament acted swiftly and summoned a number of city figures to the Commons, prompting complaints of intimidation logged in the journal of the House of Commons, ‘that, by reason of the Printing and Publishing of the Resolves and Orders of this House [*re* Hobart], the Freeholders of the said County were affrighted and terrified’.<sup>11</sup> Writing to his son on 19 May 1679, Browne reports the aftermath of the election fiasco, and the Sheriff’s refusal to comply:

Mr John Jaye, our high sheriffe was sent for by the howse of commons for not sending the writts or writings certifying those who were elected, in good time, butt hee fell sick before the pursuivant came, in Norwich of a

<sup>8</sup> 2 April 1679, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.100–101.

<sup>9</sup> 7 May 1679, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.104. The Hobart family are themselves given detailed treatment in *Repertorium*, and John Hobart was a distant kinsman (and patient) of Browne’s. See *Repertorium* in *Works* ed. Keynes, 3.124–125, and Letter to John Hobart, August 1654, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.382: ‘I was at your howse this afternoone to have kissed your hand, & testified my good wishes unto you’. The letter is signed ‘Your faythfull servant and unworthy Kinsman’. See also *Works* ed. Wilkin, 1.371, for two letters from Browne to Hobart.

<sup>10</sup> This is presumably the physician, Dr Robert Brady (c. 1627–1700), the Cambridge antiquarian, originally from Norfolk and author of the innovative *A Complete History of England* (London: 1700). He was heavily involved in the 1679 Norfolk election, and was elected in 1681. See Fox L., *English Historical Scholarship in the 16th and 17th centuries* (Oxford: 1956); Pocock J.G.A., ‘Robert Brady, 1627–1700: a Cambridge historian of the Restoration’, *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10 (1950) 186–204.

<sup>11</sup> From: “House of Commons Journal Volume 9: 24 May 1679”, Journal of the House of Commons: volume 9: 1667–1687 (1802), 630–631. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=27785>. Date accessed: 08 February 2007.

fever, & so the pursuivant was fayne to returne this day or yesterday with a certificate of his inability to take such a journey, and a promise that when hee shall bee able, hee will bee ready to come up, if they think fitt.<sup>12</sup>

Browne goes on to report, however, that the situation may have resolved itself by the time the parliamentary pursuivant (the warrant-officer charged with carrying out parliamentary summonses) was ready to return to Norwich, and 'probably hee will heare no more of it', as Hobart and Catelyn had by this time entered the Commons. The delays in the election results were sufficient, however, to exclude Hobart from participating in the vote on the First Exclusion Bill, intended to bar the accession of James II, a measure for which he had voiced adamant support.<sup>13</sup> An important element in the electoral battle, was, as John Miller puts it, a 'sudden eruption of the Norfolk clergy into electoral politics [which] defies simple explanation'.<sup>14</sup> Among the most vocal and vehement of protestors against the Commons' annulling of the (February) election result, which Browne reports in such detail, was the combative Bishop of Norwich, Anthony Sparrow (1612–1685), to whom Browne was physician.<sup>15</sup> In part, this politicization of the clergy represents the polarizing effects – into the Church Party and the Court Party, the nascent Tories and Whigs – of the two most contentious issues of the era, exclusion and the suppression of dissent, both of which were inflammatory religious questions. It is also indicative of the continuing political charge of church management and order, which constitute the barely concealed subtext of *Repertorium*. The array of political reference and knowledge cited from Browne's letters is important to a re-assessment of his political engagement. It is more significant still as a context for *Repertorium*, which is a text that both reflects and attempts to shape a Norfolk politics which is closely intertwined with ecclesiastical affairs and cathedral patronage.

<sup>12</sup> 19 May 1679, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.110.

<sup>13</sup> See Knights M., *Politics and Opinion in Crisis, 1678–1681* (Cambridge: 1994) 31.

<sup>14</sup> Miller J., *After the Civil Wars: English Politics and Government in the Reign of Charles II* (Harlow: 2000) 230.

<sup>15</sup> Miller J., *After the Civil Wars* 247.

## 2. *Repertorium and Church History*

The holograph of Browne's *Repertorium, or Some Account of the Tombs and Monuments in the Cathedral Church of Norwich* in the Norfolk Records Office is dated 1680, but its gestation period was long. Writing to John Aubrey (1626–1697), in August 1672, in response to a request from Anthony à Wood (1632–1695) for information, Browne discusses the state of the prebendary records from Norwich cathedral. He provides basic information on the inscriptions of bishops interred in the cathedral and, importantly, gives the date of his collecting this material as being the end of the Commonwealth, by which time so many brass inscriptions had been removed:

Therefore to prevent all oblivion of the rest I took the best account I could of them at the Kings returne from an understanding singing man of 91 years old and set them down in a booke which otherwise would have in a short time been forgotten, the church-men litle minding such things.<sup>16</sup>

In *Repertorium*, Browne expands this with mention of two octogenarian repositories of cathedral memory, John Wright, a clerk, and John Sandlin, the 'understanding singing man', who had been 'a chorister in the reigne of Queen Elizabeth' (3.123). What seemed at the Restoration to be the resumption of ecclesiastical normality prompted Browne's stocktaking of the effects of the iconoclasm and the damage to the cathedral, but the work remained in partial form, until events prompted its completion in the crisis of 1679–1680.

Discussion of *Repertorium* has been limited to brief asides on its terse functionality, resembling mere notes for an antiquarian. Part cathedral-audit and part lament, it has an air of incompleteness, eschewing the voluptuous prose cadences that characterize Browne's writing, especially in *Urne-buriall*. It is quite possible, of course, to read the roll-call of tombs as a rhetoric of sorts, a sparse and moving minimalism by which the names of 'a hundred brass Inscriptions torn and taken away from grave stones and tombs' (3.123) might receive some sort of restitution and a reconstruction of their place in the cathedral memory. Neglect and dissolution are so evident that they hardly require commentary on the part of the narrator, and the brevity of the anecdotes on the cathedral dead only serves to emphasize the paucity of what remains. Reporting

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<sup>16</sup> Letter to John Aubrey, 24 August 1672, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.373.

on Bishop Richard Montague (1575–1641), whose episcopate coincided with Browne's early years in Norwich, *Repertorium* notes how, despite arriving ‘with the evell effects of a quartan ague [...] yet hee studied and writt very much’. With his death, however, came the dissipation of his scholarship, his ‘excellent Library of booke, and heapes of papers fayrly writt with his owne hand, concerning the ecclesiasticall history’. No more solid than the broken stone of the cathedral or his ague-ridden body, ‘his books were sent to London, and, as it was said, his papers [...] unto Rome, from whence they never returned’ (3.130).

The bulk of the text follows the numerous bishops buried there, emphasizing in particular those who kept good ecclesiastical order. Though ostensibly an impersonal history, it registers occasionally Browne's own involvement in acquiring both the oral history and written records. He notes, for example, information discovered in ‘an old manuscript of a sacrist of the church, communicated unto mee by my worthy friend Mr John Burton’, which records details of the ‘charnell howse’. The bones, Browne surmises, like the church itself, would have been a monument of ecclesiastical probity: ‘Probably, the bones were piled in good order, the skulls arme and legge bones in their distinct rowes & courses’ (3.140). The fate of charnel house bones, however, is as precarious as that of church monuments, and Browne compares the shifting of skeletons to the ‘thousand cart loads’ of bones displaced in St Paul's, as reported in John Stowe. Part of the purpose, too, is to create a record of and commemoration for those with no inscription at ‘the place of their enterrement’. ‘In vayne wee endeavour to designe and poynt out the same’, Browne announces, before creating just such a list of the nearly forgotten, including ‘Bishop Antonie de Beck, a person of unquiet spirit, very much hated and poisoned by his servants’ and, surely with an eye to the coincidence of names: ‘likewise of Bishop Thomas Browne [...] in the reygne of Henry the sixt, [...] a strenuous Assertor of the Rights of the church, against the Citizens’ (3.131–132).

Browne's movement around the Cathedral, into its precincts where sermons were preached and ending at the top of the Steeple, has its own literary and historical momentum, accumulating its lists of the dead and providing its textual correlate to the numerous gaps where ‘a voyd space still remaineth’ (3.128). Viewed in stylistic terms, however, it compares unfavourably with his prose elsewhere. We might, then, want to rescue Browne from his own drabness and consider it a purely utilitarian document – a guide to the monuments of the church, with no pretension to literary merit. However, viewed in relation to

contemporary political events, *Repertorium* becomes more than mere orientation to the aisles and naves of Norwich, and the remainder of this essay will consider aspects of the contextual settings in which *Repertorium* has political resonance: the politics of antiquarianism, the nature of iconoclasm, and the description of pre-Civil War sermon culture in the latter part of the text, when Browne's perambulation takes us outside the building and into the precincts of the cathedral. In some ways, the text seems to have forgotten its purpose at this point, no longer paying attention to the tombs and monuments that are its ostensible subject. There is, however, a certain logic to the movement of the text, which might be described as a politics of endowment, moving from those who bore the cost of cathedral repair to those who subsided the sermon series.

If *Repertorium* has a political element, however, Browne clearly is no pamphleteer. On top of this and in spite of its detached tone, we might also note that *Repertorium* is among the most personal documents of Browne, alluding to a large number of his friends and patients, the bishops and benefactors of the cathedral with whom he had had close personal and professional links over four decades and who, it might be said, are the real focus of memorialization in the work. He writes warmly of 'my Honord friend', the eirenic Bishop Edward Reynolds (1599–1676), noting his 'singular affabillity, meeknesse and humillity', and of Joseph Hall (1574–1656), bishop during the period of iconoclasm that forms the *raison d'être* of the work, whom Browne attended after his ejection and with whom he was on close terms (3.134). The political memory of *Repertorium* is devoted to the sustained efforts, by recent bishops and by those who had financially supported the restoration of the building, to defend an ecclesiastical culture whose precarious situation is emblematised, for Browne, in the disrepair of the cathedral.

### 3. *The Plunder of the Arts?*

Discussing *Repertorium* in the context of iconoclasm and the bare facts of cathedral destruction does not, however, mean that it is plain and evident *what* is being lamented. A presumption might be that it represents a grief for, in the phrase of Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'the Plunder of the Arts' (the effort 'to destroy the aesthetic arm of the enemy [...] these works of art

were the visible symbols of a hated social system').<sup>17</sup> However, there is little evidence for such a view, either in the writings of iconoclasts, or, more importantly, in the responses to and condemnations of the act, such as *Repertorium*. The work contains some 20 mentions of the damage to and whitewashing of the cathedral. However, the iconoclastic acts are nowhere lamented in terms of the art which had been lost. There is little sense of a legacy of beauty that ought to be bequeathed to subsequent generations: Browne's praise goes no further than to note details such as the 'strong and handsome' brickwork of the cloister door. Art is not a term of reference for Browne; the destruction is social rather than aesthetic. The whitewashing of heraldic symbols, the descriptions of which occupy the central part of *Repertorium*, is as serious a loss as the stained glass and statuary. This is broadly true of antiquarian writing in the seventeenth century. Graham Parry notes in relation to the historian William Dugdale (1605–1686), for example, that it is by no means an aesthetic concept of the church that exercises his indignation. He adds: '[t]he indifference of Dugdale to architectural and monumental detail is remarkable to a modern reader'.<sup>18</sup> The unscrewing of the brass name plates represented for Browne the attempted obliteration of episcopacy from the political memory of the cathedral. Browne does not engage either with the underlying anti-episcopal sentiment or with the religious convictions behind iconoclasm. He has no truck with the destruction as anything other than vandalism, social agitation or theft.

The circumambulation begins at a telling spot, 'the monument of Miles Spencer Doctor of Lawe, and chancellour of Norwich, who lived unto ninetie yeares'. The tomb-top was cracked out of economic motives, according to Browne, who recalls that '[t]he topstone was entire, butt now broken, splitt and depressed by blowes: more special notice being taken of this stone, because men used to trie their mony upon it, and because the chapter demanded their Rents at this tomb' (3.123). Rent, not ideology (and certainly not hatred of art) underlies the destruction. As he proceeds around the cathedral, similar instances are recorded. Browne writes of 'a long brasse inscription about the tombstones, which was torne and taken away in the late times' and 'some inscriptions upon this monument were washed out, when the

<sup>17</sup> Trevor-Roper H., *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution* (London: 1992) 113, 128.

<sup>18</sup> Parry G., *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: 1995) 240.

church was late whitened' (3.127–128). He notes how the lead of the old Bishop's chapel roof was stolen, 'sould and taken away in the late times, and the fabrick growing ruinous & useless, it was taken downe' (3.134–135). Later, speaking of the coats of arms in the cloister windows, he notes that their 'distinguishable and discernible colours are not beyond my remembrance, butt in the late times when the lead was faultie & the stone work decayed, the rayne falling upon the wall washed them away' (3.138). Browne's description of the destruction of the cathedral organ and copes is distinctly underplayed compared to many contemporary accounts, the most famous of which is that of Joseph Hall in *Hard Measure*, who describes 'a kind of Sacrilegious and profane procession, all the Organ pipes, Vestments, both Copes and Surplices' carried before them, with 'a leud wretch walking before the Train [...] imitating in an impious scorne the tune, and usurping the words of the Letany used formerly in the Church'.<sup>19</sup>

Browne, by contrast, emphasizes less the destruction than the restitution of the church by his own benevolent friends, in a series of passages that carefully signal the restoration of, as much as the damage to, the church:

There was formerly a fayre and large but playne organ in the church, and in the same place with this at present, that in the late tumultuous times was pulled downe, broken, sould & made away. Butt since his Majesties Restauration, another fayre well tuned playne organ was set up [...] and afterward adorned by the care and cost of my Honourd freind [sic] Dr Herbert Astley the present and worthy Dean of Norwich.

[...] There were also 5 or 6 copes belonging to the church, which though they looked somewhat old were richly embroidered. These were formally carried into the market place, some blowing the organ pipes before them, and were cast into a fire provided for that purpose with shewing and Rejoycing, so that at present there is butt one cope belonging to the church, which was presented by my Honord freind Philip Harbord Esqr and present High Sheriff of Norfolk. (3.140–141)

This account, for all that it registers outrage at the actions of the iconoclasts, is also an assertion of a community restored, by both the return of the king, and the munificence of local donors and friends of Browne.

<sup>19</sup> Hall J., *The shaking of the Olive-tree [...] Together with [...] Hard Measure* (London: 1660) 63.

#### 4. *Memorial and Antiquarianism*

As a record of the ruins of iconoclasm and what was lost ‘in the time of the late civil wars’, *Repertorium* shares with a number of contemporary antiquarian works the project of tracing the continuity of ecclesiastical culture, by rescuing church monument from oblivion and from the ravages of iconoclastic campaigns.<sup>20</sup> The genesis of this memorial literature is John Weever’s (1575/6–1632) influential work, *Ancient Funeral Monuments*, a work positively thundering with indignation at the erasing of social memory and social order that seemed to underlie the obliteration of church inscriptions:

knowing withall how barbarously within these his Maiesties Dominions, they are (to the shame of our time) broken downe, and utterly almost all ruined, their brasen Inscriptions erazed, torne away, and pilfered, by which inhumane, deformidable act, the honourable memory of many vertuous and noble persons deceased, is extinguished, and the true understanding of divers Families in these Realmes (who have descended of these worthy persons aforesaid) is so darkened, [...] I determined with my selfe to collect such memorials of the deceased, as were remaining as yet undefaced.<sup>21</sup>

Weever’s work was the model for the numerous church surveys, histories and catalogues that were produced in ever greater numbers during the 1650s and into the Restoration era, a time during which, it has been plausibly conjectured, many royalist-inclined scholars found their employment prospects severely curtailed.<sup>22</sup> Weever is responding to neglect of churches as much as earlier phases of wilful iconoclasm, but writers of the mid- and late seventeenth century have the very recent effects of civil war destruction in mind when they catalogue church property. Among the most significant of these later writers is William Dugdale, with whom Browne corresponded extensively on various antiquarian projects. The fiercely royalist Dugdale published his vast survey, *Monasticon anglicanum*, in 1661 and he reports it having

<sup>20</sup> A useful general account of the history of cathedrals in the era is Lehmburg S.E., *Cathedrals Under Siege: Cathedrals in English Society 1600–1700* (Exeter: 1996).

<sup>21</sup> Weever J., “The Author to the Reader”, *Ancient funeral monuments within the united monarchie of Great Britaine, Ireland, and the islands adjacent with the dissolved monasteries therein contained* (London: 1631) unpaginated.

<sup>22</sup> This presumption underlies, for example, Graham Parry’s essay, “In the Land of Moles and pismires: Thomas Browne’s Antiquarian Writings”, in Rhodes N. (ed.), *English Renaissance Prose: History, Language and Politics* (Tempe, AZ: 1997) 247–258.

been written in the context of the ‘Presbyterian contagion, which then began violently to breake out’. Nostalgia for the medieval and monastic past of the country had its own dangers, however, and Dugdale was accused of crypto-Catholic purposes in his publication.<sup>23</sup> John Davies’s (1625–1693) translated account of iconoclastic destruction at Durham likewise positions itself as a staunch attack on Presbyterianism. Describing the felling of an ornate cross over four pages, he reports how

of late, in the year of our Lord God, 1639. in the night time, the same was broken down, and defaced by some lewd, and contemptuous wicked persons, thereto encouraged (as it seemed) by some who loved Christ the worse for the Cross sake, as utterly, and spightfully despising all Ancient Ceremonies, and Monuments.<sup>24</sup>

Davies’s text (though in large part a translation of older documents) borders frequently on hagiography, with its descriptions of miracles and God’s providential revenge. Reporting how St. Cuthbert, for example, was wrongly accused by the King’s daughter of getting her pregnant, Davies tells how God’s providential wrath was enacted when the ground simply opens up and swallows her whole, avoiding, one presumes, any troublesome paternity battle.<sup>25</sup> Such accounts of miraculous saints were not designed to assuage fears that cathedral culture was a bastion of Catholicism.

However, another aspect of these texts is also noted by Parry, in his comment on the English abridgement of his *Monasticon anglicanum*, with its emphasis on tithes, endowments, charitable donations, genealogies and heraldry, a focus which makes it seem, Parry tells us, ‘as if the *Monasticon* was a Restoration tax-evaders’ guide’, by which one might establish one’s rights and pedigree and by which the Church’s property rights and claims might be promoted.<sup>26</sup> The financial history of the Church, both its income and its benevolence, is an intrinsic aspect to

<sup>23</sup> Dugdale W., “Epistle”, *The history of St. Pauls Cathedral in London from its foundation untill these times extracted out of originall charters, records, leiger books, and other manuscripts* (London: 1658) unpaginated. Dugdale W., *Monasticon anglicanum* (London: 1661) translated as *Monasticon anglicanum, or, The history of the ancient abbies, and other monasteries, hospitals, cathedral and collegiate churches, in England and Wales* (London: 1693). On accusations of Catholic sympathies, see Parry G., *Trophies of Time* 228. For letters between Dugdale and Browne, see *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.299–328.

<sup>24</sup> Davies J., *The ancient rite and monuments of the monastical, & cathedral church of Durham* (London: 1672) 47.

<sup>25</sup> Davies J., *Ancient Rite* 61.

<sup>26</sup> Parry G., *Trophies of Time* 230–231.

these works of ecclesiastical antiquarianism. This is equally relevant to *Repertorium*, a key aspect of which is its geography of bequests around the cathedral, paying attention to the benefactors of both its physical fabric and its preaching life. The shift to the Green Yard at the end of *Repertorium*, where Browne discusses the sermon history of the cathedral precincts, records the dispute over the inheritance and terms of the endowment. The sermon cycles are, clearly, intrinsic to the cathedral memory that Browne traces, and while our knowledge of the sermon content is necessarily partial, it can be reconstructed to some extent and with some useful bearing on *Repertorium*.

### 5. *Sermon Culture and Repertorium*

Joseph Hall's description of the sacking of the cathedral, cited earlier, includes a description of 'the Leaden Crosse [...] sawne down from over the Green-Yard Pulpit', and Browne takes the reader back to the preaching yard in its halcyon pre-war days, telling us that

[b]efore the late times, the Combination Sermons were preached in the summer time at the crosse in the Green Yard [...] The Maior, Aldermen with their wives and officers had a well contrived place built [...] so that they were not offended by rayne (3.141).

These 'Combination Sermons' were the weekly lectures that arose and were paid for out of the gift of parishioners. A detailed account of the scene follows, who sat where and the cost of seats for the auditors, from 'the better sort' down to the 'Hospitall boyes'. Finally he turns his panorama to the preacher himself:

The preacher had his face to the south, and there was a paynted board of a foot & a halfe broad and about a yard & a half long hanging over his head before, upon which were paynted the armes of the benefactors toward the combination sermon, which hee particularly commemorated in his prayer, and they were these: Sr Joh[n] Suckling, Sr John Pettus, Edward Nuttall, Henry Fasset, John Myngay. (3.141)

The scene, its 'paynted board' resembling nothing so much as an advertising hoarding at a football match with its sponsorship and heraldic logos, seems initially at odds with the antiquarian purposes of *Repertorium*. Though it might seem incongruous, in fact it clarifies what precisely is being memorialized in the text. If *Repertorium* is an index of the memorials defaced in the civil war, it is also is a lament

for the passing of this culture of sermons which was destroyed ‘when the church was sequestered’. The names of the sponsors are to be etched in the cathedral memory, such as it is, for their contribution to its upkeep. These are also names that appear regularly in Browne’s letters, as part of his community and family circle.<sup>27</sup>

Post-Restoration attempts to move the pulpit to Newhall Green and to continue the sermon cycles there were unsuccessful, because ‘the heyres of the Benefactors’ refused to ‘pay the wonted beneficence’ (3.141) for sermons preached outside the cathedral, although the lectures had, by the time of *Repertorium*, become a prominent aspect of cathedral life again. They were, moreover, a highly politicized medium, engaging as full a spectrum of political issues as appears in Browne’s letters.

Among the sermons we might note from the combination lecture series were Charles Robotham’s (1626–1700) *Three sermons* (1680), which were delivered ‘upon occasion of the Annual Commemoration of the Gift of Sir John Sucklin to that Corporation’, the endowment that Browne describes. Robotham, rector of Reisam in Norfolk, discusses, indeed attempts to arbitrate on, the electoral politics around the handover of the Norwich mayoralty with which I began. He takes it upon himself to warn the two local politicians ‘and first for you Sir, who must by and by resigne up your Sword into another hand [...] [t]ake the best care you can that you go off the Stage with as much innocence as you came on’.<sup>28</sup> This was, clearly, a sermon culture unafraid of entering into politics. He preaches about the necessary discipline and peace of comely and orderly church life, a topic that also exercises Bishop Sparrow, but he links this unambiguously to the terms of the Exclusion Crisis. Borrowing from the consummate apology for absolutist monarchy, Robert Filmer’s (?1588–1653) *Patriarcha*, published in 1679 though written far earlier, Robotham claims that ‘[t]he first Government in the world was that of Fathers and Kingship is nothing else but the Apex or Supremacy of fatherly Power, devolved into the hands of the present Monarch’ (141).<sup>29</sup> Filmer’s argument – that Adam’s fatherly power in ‘the first government’ constitutes the origin of kingship,

<sup>27</sup> The Myngays, for example, are mentioned on 15 October 1680, the Pettus Family on 14 May 1681, but the connections go back to Browne’s earliest surviving correspondence.

<sup>28</sup> Robotham C., *The royal nursing-father; discoursed in a sermon preach’d at the cathedral in Norwich* (London: 1680) 29.

<sup>29</sup> Robotham C., *Three sermons preach’d upon extraordinary occasions* (London: 1680) 30.

which is in turn devolved upon subsequent sovereigns – elicited John Locke's (1632–1704) famous and furious response in the first of the *Two Treatises*. The debate constitutes the Exclusion Crisis in miniature, whether the king's right to his throne transcends or is contingent upon his actions and his adoption of a particular religion. When Robotham evokes Filmer's Adam, with his unquestionable patriarchal authority, he is addressing the core constitutional issue of the era, and using the pulpit to highly political ends. An orderly church is the prerequisite of an orderly kingdom, he implies, and Robotham's account makes this entirely dependent on the king's simultaneously paternal and maternal direction: 'This is the Benefit of Nursing-fathers; this is the Milk that comes out of the Brast of Kings, the establishing of religion by the Sovereign Power'.<sup>30</sup> Making passing reference to Isaiah 60.16, Robotham insists on his mothering king as the sole source of sustenance for the nation and the sole root of authority. Time and again, Norwich preachers address these key question of the Exclusion Crisis, the king's power, dissent and toleration, among which preachers we might note Benedict Riveley (1627/8–1695), whose 'eloquent funeral sermon' for Bishop Reynolds is praised in *Repertorium* (3.134), and who preached a fierce cathedral sermon in 1679 against non-conformism.<sup>31</sup>

Whether Browne took political notice of such sermons is, of course, conjectural, and whether he heard echoes of Filmer and Locke even more so. It is worth noting, however, the extent of his interest in this highly politicized contemporary sermon culture, both within *Repertorium* and in his correspondence. The letters between father and son recommend sermons for the other to read. Browne mentions sermons by Dr Dove, Dr Burnet and the Bishop of Oxford as 'very good', referring, it seems, to the recently published Gunpowder sermon of Henry Dove (1641–1695) (lamenting 'how the King and Prince, with the whole High Court of Parliament were all marked out for slaughter, to be blown up alive, and involv'd in one common death without a minutes warning') and the Great Fire sermon of Gilbert Burnet (1643–1715).<sup>32</sup> Burnet

<sup>30</sup> Robotham C., *Royal nursing-father* 30.

<sup>31</sup> Riveley B., *A sermon preach'd at the Cathedral of Norwich upon the annual solemnity of the Mayors admission to his office* (London: 1679) 29. Other such sermons include Cleaver J., *The subjects duty a sermon preached at the cathedral in Norwich, before the Right Worshipful, the mayor and Court of Aldermen* (London: 1676); Paston J., *The magistrates authority asserted, in a sermon, preached at the cathedral in Norwich* (London: 1673).

<sup>32</sup> 28 February 1681, *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.185. Dove H., *A sermon preached before the honourable House of Commons* (London: 1680) 10; Burnet G., *A sermon preached before the*

notes elsewhere, in a phrase that echoes the sentiments (and indeed the phrasing) of *Repertorium*, how the clergy of the era were deeply and repeatedly exercised by the parallels between the politics of exclusion and those of the period before the Civil Wars:

The bishops and the clergy, apprehending that a rebellion and with it the pulling the church to pieces were designed, set themselves [...] to write against the late times to draw a parallel between the present time and them.<sup>33</sup>

*Repertorium* is itself a record of Browne's recognition of the similarities between the build-up to the Civil Wars and the political crises of the late 1670s, an over-riding concern to point to the echoes of the pre-Civil War era, with all its chaos at a moment of apparent *déjà vu*, when ecclesiastical and constitutional affairs seemed to be reaching a similar boiling point. *Repertorium* is heavily inflected towards Browne's own connections with the cathedral, its bishops and the families buried within. It is a personal as much as an architectural record, for all that it is constructed as a walk around the aisles and precincts of the building. Browne's work is, clearly, a correlate of the antiquarian writings that abounded in the era, and like them its concerns are social as much as monumental or aesthetic. But it is important too to note the political dimensions of producing a history of cathedral strife. Browne is most often presumed to be an active figure in the 1640s, but it was during the Restoration period and beyond that his national and international reputation was consolidated. His correspondence with figures of note from the scientific and antiquarian worlds – John Evelyn (1620–1706), Henry Oldenburg (c. 1619–1677), Elias Ashmole (1617–1692), William Dugdale, John Aubrey and others – comes from this later period. It is evident, from his letters, that he is politically aware. *Repertorium* shows, too, that he is politically astute, in its allusions to the Exclusion and ecclesiastical crises, in the parallels it draws with Civil War chaos and the warning it conveys at a time when the nation again seemed on a precipitous brink. *Repertorium* does not aim to replicate the lyrical splendours of *Urne-Buriall*, but it is careful and measured prose nonetheless and reveals an important side of Browne that is often concealed beneath his more symphonic writings.

*Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and aldermen of the city of London [...] being the anniversary fast for the burning of London* (London: 1680).

<sup>33</sup> Burnet G., *History of My Own Time*, ed. O. Airy, 2 vols (Oxford: 1899) 2.221. Quoted in Spurr J., *The Restoration Church of England* (New Haven, CT: 1991) 77.

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## URNE-BURIALL AND THE INTERREGNUM ROYALIST

Philip Major

### 1

Thomas Browne's well-attested Royalism is nowhere more evident than in his letters to his son, Thomas, at the Restoration of Charles II (1630–1685) in 1660. These reveal Browne's excitement at the preparations for the King's Coronation, relate with approbation a national day of humiliation and fast for the 'Abominable murder' of Charles I (1600–1649), and demonstrate his unswerving devotion to the Church of England, relaying news of the 'sweet organ', and traditional Anglican service, now, at last, being reintroduced to a Norwich Cathedral desecrated and de-sanctified by Parliamentarian forces during the Civil Wars.<sup>1</sup> Additional evidence of Browne's Royalism can be found in his published work, where, for example, we may adduce *Repertorium* (1680), with its barely concealed bitterness at puritan iconoclasm. 'In the time of the late civil wars', Browne writes, 'there were about a hundred brass inscriptions torn and taken away from grave stones and tombs, in the cathedral church of Norwich' (3.123), the alliterative 'torn and taken away' strikingly emphasizing Browne's indignation.<sup>2</sup>

Also to be found in *Repertorium*, strengthening the impression of Browne's anti-Puritanism, is a laudatory passage on a Royalist and Anglican *cause célèbre*, the ejected and sequestered Bishop of Norwich, Joseph Hall (1574–1656), Browne's patient until his death. Among other acts earning him the opprobrium of Parliament, Hall had railed

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<sup>1</sup> Browne T., *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) 4.5, 4.8. References to Browne hereafter will be in text and to this edition. Browne's Royalism is discussed in: Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) 14–15; Wilding M., "Religio Medici in the English Revolution" in *Dragons' Teeth: Literature in the English Revolution*, (Oxford: 1987) 89–113; Post J., "Browne's Revision of *Religio Medici*", *Studies in English Literature* 25 (1985) 145–163; Berensmeyer I., "Rhetoric, Religion and Politics in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*", *Studies in English Literature* 46 (2006) 113–132.

<sup>2</sup> See also Killeen K., "In the time of the late Civil Wars": Post-Restoration Browne and the Political Memory of *Repertorium*, in this volume.

in print, even more uncompromisingly than Browne was to do, against the damage caused to Norwich Cathedral.<sup>3</sup> Hall, Browne declares, suffered ‘in the Rebellious times, when the revenues of the church were alienated’, an allusion to the confiscation of all Hall’s properties during the Civil Wars, along with the withholding of his annual allowance. To Browne, Hall was, despite – or perhaps because of – his travails at the hands of Parliament, a man of ‘singular humillity, patience and pietie’ (3.134).

Yet both of these sources – Browne’s letters to his son and *Repertorium* – post-date the English Revolution; it has always been much more difficult to accurately establish Browne’s political position – that is, to find any tangible evidence of his Royalism – during it. His wide circle of royalist and Anglican friends during these years, including, apart from Hall, Sir Thomas Knyvett (1596–1658), Sir Hamon L’Estrange (1605–1660), and Charles Le Gros (1596–1656), to whose son, Thomas (b. 1616–fl. 1656), *Urne-Buriall (Hydriotaphia)* was dedicated, may in itself signpost his political loyalties.<sup>4</sup> Yet it would be naïve to pronounce on Browne’s opinions on the basis of the company he kept: as Kathryn Murphy has recently shown, Browne was in contact with the Puritan Barrington circle in 1640.<sup>5</sup> More direct evidence of Browne’s Royalism during the 1640s and 1650s has proved elusive. For example, his extant correspondence during these decades, unlike that at the Restoration, betrays barely a hint of political partisanship, though it has been speculated that this was in part for reasons both of self-censorship and self-preservation.<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah Finch has remarked that Browne ‘made it a point to allow no scrap of evidence about his political feelings or activities to remain among his papers’, since ‘it would have been foolhardy to fail to destroy even mildly incriminating documents’.<sup>7</sup>

As for his published work in this period, one hundred years ago Edmund Gosse spoke for most commentators in noting an ‘absence of almost all allusion to the Civil War’ in Browne’s corpus; indeed,

<sup>3</sup> Hall J., ‘Bishop Hall’s *Hard Measure*’ (1647), in *The Works of Joseph Hall* (London: 1714) xvii.

<sup>4</sup> Toynbee M., ‘Some Friends of Sir Thomas Browne’, *Norfolk Archaeology* 31 (1956–1957) 377–394.

<sup>5</sup> Murphy K., ‘A Man of Excellent Parts’: The Manuscript Readers of Thomas Browne’s *Religio Medici*”, *Times Literary Supplement* 5492 (4 July 2008) 14–15.

<sup>6</sup> For more on Browne’s correspondence at the Restoration, see Kevin Killeen’s essay in this volume.

<sup>7</sup> Finch J., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Doctor’s Life of Science and Faith* (New York: 1950) 129.

in confidently asserting that ‘nothing in his works would lead us to suppose that he ever had any personal cognisance of it’.<sup>8</sup> It is a view which persisted well into the second half of the twentieth century: Joan Bennett claimed that ‘there is nothing in his published writings to remind us of the Civil War’; and D.W. Jefferson, while acknowledging that the ‘outpouring of dissident opinion after 1640 must have brought home to a royalist and Anglican sensibility the disconcerting strength of alien forces’, nevertheless read into Browne’s writings ‘an untroubled contemplation of eternity’, in which the author ‘represents a sensibility that chooses not to relate itself to the turbulence of the age’.<sup>9</sup>

Where, in this case, may we turn for more substantial evidence of Browne’s Royalism during the 1640s and 1650s? Traditionally, two possible examples, at most, have been cited: first, Browne’s refusal, in October 1643, along with 431 other members of the Norwich gentry, to provide funds for the retaking of Royalist-held Newcastle by the Parliamentarian army; and second, his apparent signature to a pamphlet published under the heading of *Vox Norwichi*, or *The Cry of Norwich*, ‘reviling the Magistrates and Ministry of Norwich’ for ejecting Norwich’s local Anglican ministers.<sup>10</sup> Such evidence, however, is far from incontrovertible; indeed, the significance of the one and factual basis of the other have come under close scrutiny. As Jonathan Post has argued, Browne’s response to the demands of Parliament in 1643 might well ‘express a neutralist sentiment or even simply his antipathy to violence’ rather than signal his Royalism; while the authenticity of the ‘Browne’ signature on *Vox Norwichi* is complicated by the existence of at least four other men of that name in Norwich at the time.<sup>11</sup>

Other than in these two instances, both of them problematic, the records are silent on the subject of Browne’s Royalism during these years. And this evidential lacuna has in turn informed the typical – and, as I will argue in this essay, increasingly unsustainable – image we have of him as a man essentially disengaged from the political and religious controversies of the day, living a studious life in Norwich, busy

<sup>8</sup> Gosse E., *Sir Thomas Browne* (London: 1905) 102.

<sup>9</sup> Bennett J., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Man of Achievement in Literature*’ (Cambridge: 1962) 1; Jefferson D.W., “‘Pitch beyond Ubiquity’: Thought and Style in Sir Thomas Browne”, in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne: The Ann Arbor Tercentenary Lectures and Essays* (Columbia, MO and London: 1982) 143–154, here 154.

<sup>10</sup> Beecheno F.R., “The Norwich Subscription for the Regaining of Newcastle”, *Norfolk Archaeology* 18 (1914) 149–160.

<sup>11</sup> Post J., *Sir Thomas Browne* (Boston: 1987) 50.

with his flourishing medical practice, his remarkably disparate literary activities somehow transcending the turmoil and prejudices of the English Revolution. In this view, if Browne held strong political opinions, he was unwilling to advertise them, like so many other Royalists who reluctantly chose a *modus vivendi* with Parliament and the Commonwealth over exile. This image is reinforced by the idyllic terms in which the Norwich and Norfolk of these years, universally considered as steadfastly Parliamentarian, have been described. As R.W. Ketton-Cremer somewhat quaintly put it:

Work went on as usual in fields and cowsheds and barns; the looms of Norwich clacked and rattled as busily as ever; the spinners and knitters toiled industriously in every village; the little ships crept about the coast, in and out of Wells and Blakeney, Cley and Cromer. Dr Thomas Browne visited his patients.<sup>12</sup>

Over the last twenty years this orthodoxy has begun to be successfully challenged. Important work has been done to temper the traditional image of Browne as politically passive during the Civil Wars and Interregnum, and the notion of Norfolk as a stronghold of Puritanism and Parliamentarianism is now widely contested. For example, the refusal of hundreds of members of the Norwich gentry to offer financial support for the retaking of Newcastle by Parliament in 1643, whether or not Browne was among their number, echoes the response at the outset of the Civil Wars, in August 1642, when many of the same individuals were reluctant to contribute to the Parliamentarian war effort. Though probably of more symbolic than practical value, this earlier act of defiance was nevertheless taken seriously by Parliament, leading to an order in October 1642 authorizing the Deputy Lieutenants and Committees of Norfolk to disarm a number of its gentry 'for not contributing with the rest of the good subjects to the common charge in this time of imminent danger'.<sup>13</sup>

The apparent neutrality of Browne's published works in these years has been called into question, including that of Browne's complex, highly wrought essay, *Urne-Buriall*, begun in 1656 and completed and published, together with *The Garden of Cyrus*, in May 1658, when the Restoration was still two years away. Graham Parry, for example, has placed Browne's composition of *Urne-Buriall* within the wider context

<sup>12</sup> Ketton-Cremer R.W., *A Norfolk Gallery* (London: 1948) 56–57.

<sup>13</sup> Ketton-Cremer R.W., *Norfolk Gallery* 66.

of Royalists such as William Burton (1609–1657) and Thomas Fuller (1608–1661) turning for political expression in troubled times to works of antiquity, in a political and religious climate where ‘numerous antiquaries had High Church inclinations which chimed with their sense of tradition and their fondness for ceremonies’.<sup>14</sup> Amplifying this theme, Achsah Guibbory has argued that, at a time when Parliament’s *Directory of Public Worship* (1645) proscribed Anglican burial rites, Browne’s essay is ‘in part a defence of these rites and, indeed, of ceremony more largely’, that his urns have ‘voices’ which ‘speak’ to the present.<sup>15</sup>

Valuable as these findings have been, however, the rich seam of *Urne-Buriall*’s political potentialities is still to be fully mined. Vivid new light on the essay’s Royalism is cast by two fresh lines of enquiry: first, an examination of a much stronger and more specific link than has previously been acknowledged between Browne’s essay and a funeral sermon delivered by John Whitefoot (1610–1699) in honour of Bishop Hall, which Browne attended; and second, the identification of several thematic intersections between *Urne-Buriall* and the poems of Henry Vaughan (1621–1695); that is, the association of *Urne-Buriall* with a particular strain of contemporary royalist “survivalist” literature, a strain that was so widespread, and so recognizable, that by marshalling its tropes Browne was sending unmistakable signals about his political position.

## 2

Whitefoot’s funeral sermon was preached at Browne’s church of St. Peter Mancroft in Norwich on 30 September 1656, and published in London as *Death’s Alarum* in 1658.<sup>16</sup> Inevitably, with its subject in royalist eyes

<sup>14</sup> Parry G., *The Trophies of Time: English Antiquarians of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: 1995) on Browne, 249–274; quotation from 18.

<sup>15</sup> Guibbory A., *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton* (Cambridge: 1988) 132. The full name of this measure, enacted by Parliament on 4 January 1645, was *An Ordinance for taking away the Book of Common Prayer, and for establishing and putting in execution of the Directory for the publique worship of God*. Post’s *Sir Thomas Browne* also calls Browne’s neutrality into question.

<sup>16</sup> Whitefoot J., *Israel agchithanes, Deaths Alarum, or, The presage of approaching death given in a funeral sermon [...] (London: 1656)*. All quotations from Whitefoot’s sermon to this source. Although the sermon does not appear in the catalogue of his library it is, however, likely that Browne would have wanted to own a copy, since printed funeral sermons of this period were often treated as mementos of the deceased.

a revered and persecuted Anglican bishop, it is freighted with contemporary political significance. Moreover, the fact that twenty years after the event, in *Repertorium*, Browne is moved to describe the sermon of his ‘learned and faythfull old friend’ Whitefoot as ‘excellent’, implies that it made a considerable personal impression on him (3.134).<sup>17</sup> But why exactly did Browne regard it so highly, and what does this say about its possible influence on *Urne-Buriall* itself, which Browne had begun composing four months, at most, before he heard the sermon?<sup>18</sup>

Most obviously, Browne doubtless approved of the conspicuously reverential – if perhaps in places formulaic – tones in which Whitefoot, the Rector of Heigham, the parish to which Hall had retired, memorialized his subject. In his dedicatory epistle to Hall’s son Robert, Whitefoot avers that the saintly Hall had in death been ‘gathered to the spirits of the just that are made perfect’. More significantly, however, there is an intriguing and hitherto under-explored thematic overlap between *Death’s Alarum* and *Urne-Buriall*.<sup>19</sup> The former is based, at least initially, on Genesis 47 and 50, chapters suffused, like Browne’s essay, with the subject not simply of death, but of burial rites. Emphasis is placed by Whitefoot on the imperatives of how and where to be buried, instanced by an early passage:

For that Israel did foresee and consider the approach of his death is plainly implied, as the reason why he took such a careful order with his son Joseph, about the place of his burial [...] The like order did Joseph give to his sons, about his burial, when he saw his time to die drew nigh, Gen 50.25,26. Both of them were very solicitous to be buried in the land of Canaan.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, within this thematic congruence the specific subject of the fate of man’s bones, an interlinking and constantly recurring topic in *Urne-Buriall*, features equally prominently in the sermon:

<sup>17</sup> Whitefoot provided the first biography of Browne in “Some minutes for the life of Sir Thomas Browne”, first published in Browne’s *Posthumous Works* (London: 1712) xxiv–xxxvii, in which he claimed to have known Browne better than ‘any other Man, that is now left alive’ (xxvii).

<sup>18</sup> Guibbory has dated *Urne-Buriall*’s composition between May 1656 and its publication date in 1658: Guibbory A., “A rational of old Rites: Sir Thomas Browne’s *Urne-Buriall* and the Conflict over Ceremony”, *Yearbook of English Studies* 21 (1991) 229–241, here 231.

<sup>19</sup> Post has observed ‘buried reminiscences’ of the sermon in *Urne-Buriall*: Post J., *Sir Thomas Browne* 134.

<sup>20</sup> Whitefoot J., *Death’s Alarum* 3.

By faith, Joseph when he died made mention of the departing of Israel [out of Egypt] and gave commandment concerning his bones. Namely, that they should be carried with them into Canaan: Thereby declaring his own, and confirming their faith, concerning their deliverance out of the Egyptian Thraldom, which for some time they were yet to endure, and their certain possession of the Land of Promise.<sup>21</sup>

For Royalists and Anglicans living under the Commonwealth the contemporary political import of ‘deliverance out of the Egyptian Thraldom’, of ‘some time yet to endure’, and of eventual ‘possession of the Land of Promise’, would have been only too clearly inferred. What is particularly pertinent here, though, for its close resemblance to *Urne-Buriall*, is the precise reference to bones and burial, and the need to be ‘very solicitous’ over where one is laid to rest. In his dedication to Thomas Le Gros, Browne poses the central questions of his essay, and in so doing parallels the concerns of Whitefoot: ‘But who knows the fate of his bones, or how often he is to be buried? who hath the Oracle of his ashes, or whither they are to be scattered?’ (1.131). Moreover, in Browne’s subsequent, lengthy description of the manner and custom of burial rites, including the respective histories of burial and inhumation, both Christian and pagan, the question not just of how but where one is buried, and its perceived importance for attaining immortality, continues, as in Whitefoot’s sermon, to loom large, whether it concerns the traditions of Rome, Norway, Denmark or Britain.

As little as four months, at most, after commencing work on *Urne-Buriall*, therefore, Browne witnesses, and in his own words is greatly impressed by, a royalist-leaning sermon by Whitefoot which invokes themes of burial and bones to help espouse a royalist cause which is presently afflicted but will ultimately triumph. This provides adequate grounds for asserting the strong likelihood that the imagery of *Urne-Buriall* was influenced by the sermon, and that through such parallels we can uncover some of the covert royalist sentiment in Browne.

Yet one of the enduring, if for the present purpose frustrating, features of Browne’s authorial intent is that we never quite seem able to pin it down. That is, just when, as here, a correlation with a contemporary work presents itself, Browne’s independence of thought resurfaces, casting doubt upon the strength of such connections. All too often, indeed, to borrow from *Urne-Buriall* itself, ‘Great examples grow thin

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<sup>21</sup> Whitefoot J., *Death’s Alarum* 4.

[...] Simplicity flies away' (1.132). In this instance our problem is that, on the specifics of the Canaan passage, though the subject matter is identical, Browne is appreciably more ambivalent than Whitefoot, who unequivocally relegates Israel's and Joseph's wish to be buried in Canaan to mere 'fancy', or

ridiculous absurdity; namely, because there shall be no resurrection at all of any but Jews, and of them only in the Land of *Canaan*, whither all bodies that are not buried there must be rol'd through some secret burroughs of the earth, from their most distant places of burial, before they can be rais'd to life.<sup>22</sup>

By contrast, Browne incorporates the same passage of scripture into his own work in a manifestly more sympathetic and accommodating manner:

Some think the ancient Patriarchs so earnestly desired to lay their bones in *Canaan*, as hoping to make a part of that Resurrection, and though thirty miles from Mount *Calvary*, at least to lie in that Region, which should produce the first-fruits of the dead. And if according to learned conjecture, the bodies of men shall rise where their greatest Reliques remain, many are not like to erre in the Topography of their Resurrection. (1.157)

Browne, like Whitefoot, ultimately exposes the inefficacy, indeed futility, of the ancients' desire to 'lay their bones in *Canaan*', and to that end the tone of 'the Topography of their Resurrection' could conceivably be mockingly sardonic. Yet unlike Whitefoot's, Browne's tenor in this passage, as Claire Preston has observed, is generally 'fluid and conjectural rather than fixed and unqualified'.<sup>23</sup> In contrast to Whitefoot, he does not dismiss out of hand, as 'ridiculous absurdity', the wishes of those who would 'make a part of that Resurrection'. Thus, while the thematic convergence between the two works is striking, sufficiently so to assert a direct influence of *Death's Alarum* on *Urne-Buriall*, the particular style and sensitivity applied by Browne set clear parameters to that influence.

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<sup>22</sup> Whitefoot J., *Death's Alarum* 4.

<sup>23</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne* 134.

For Royalists living in England during the English Revolution, the genre of the funeral sermon was only one of many which provided a potent source of consolation and indeed subversive defiance. A much deeper well of recurring themes and motifs designed to sustain Royalists and Royalism in defeat can be found in the religious and secular cavalier poetry of the 1640s and 1650s. Among the most prevalent of these are friendship, contemplation, solitude, and stoic notions of seeing out the “cavalier winter”. The devotional poetry of the Welsh writer and translator Henry Vaughan – like Browne, a trained physician – embraces all of these, as well as other equally important royalist literary themes, such as hidden potentiality, subterranean survival, recovery, quietude, privacy, obscurity, innocence, and the transience of time.<sup>24</sup> Vaughan’s hermetic beliefs, with their concealed and occult connotations, can equally well be read in terms of a hidden royalist agenda, in much the same way as Browne (as I am arguing here) conceals his royalist convictions in *Urne-Buriall*.

Juxtaposing Vaughan’s poems with *Urne-Buriall*, it should readily be conceded, is methodologically problematic, since it entails drawing analogies between distinct literary genres. In addition, there is currently no firm evidence that Browne had read the work of, much less met, Henry Vaughan, although he certainly knew other royalist writers, such as Roger L’Estrange (1616–1704), and may at least have heard of Vaughan through their mutual acquaintance, Bishop Hall.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, in the wider context of royalist and Anglican oppositional writers and writings in this era, a judicious comparison between the responses of Vaughan and Browne to political disaster is not only a legitimate, but also a productive exercise, deepening our understanding of one of Browne’s most celebrated works.

Vaughan most memorably articulates his own evocative brand of poetry for the Royalist in retreat, while like Browne claiming – or rather, affecting – detachment from political events of the day, in his collection of poems entitled *Silex Scintillans*, first published in 1650, with an equally popular second edition published in 1655. Of particular

<sup>24</sup> For a recent account of Vaughan’s experience of the Civil Wars see Philip West’s *Henry Vaughan’s Silex Scintillans: Scripture Uses* (Oxford: 2001) 150–153.

<sup>25</sup> Gosse E., *Sir Thomas Browne* 107.

significance is the allusion to retired, buried and concealed Royalism and Anglicanism that pervades the poems of *Silex*. The imagery of the poems' titles, such as "Burial", "The Seed Growing Secretly", and "The Retreate", is suggestive in itself of this key theme, immediately signalling a consonance with the language – at the very least – of Browne's essay. Like Robert Herrick's (1591–1674) lament for the British Church in *Noble Numbers* (1648), these are ostensibly private poems with a palpably public quality.<sup>26</sup>

"The Seed Growing Secretly" is a meditation on Mark 4.26, in which Vaughan, underlining the piquancy of the obscurity motif, consoles:

Dear, secret greenness! Nursed below  
Tempests and winds, and winter-nights,  
Vex not, that but one sees thee grow,  
That One made all these lesser lights.

[...] Then bless thy secret growth, nor catch  
At noise, but thrive unseen and dumb;  
Keep clean, bear fruit, earn life and watch  
Till the white winged Reapers come!<sup>27</sup>

Robert Wilcher has cogently argued that this poem can be read 'in the context of a countryside peopled by Royalists biding their time until the great day comes when their loyalty will be vindicated'.<sup>28</sup> The application of such a reading to the imagery and political possibilities of *Urne-Buriall* is equally valid; that is, if Vaughan's 'secret greenness' has been read as a reference to Royalism, then so too may Browne's recently unearthed urns, buried close beneath the surface. In his explication of burial practices, there are a number of passages where Browne bears witness to the same politically loaded theme of hidden growth. As with Vaughan's 'secret greenness', Royalism in Browne's *Urne-Buriall*, embodied, in one sense, in the urns themselves, is required to lie low, to live furtively, 'unseen and dumb', waiting for its potential to be realized. It is a latent yet potent Royalism, revealed by archaeo-

<sup>26</sup> Summers C., "Tears for Herrick's Church", *George Herbert Journal* 14 (1990–1991) 51–71. Highlighting the implicitness characteristic of royalist "survivalist" literature, Summers comments that one of the key poems in Herrick's volume, "The Widdowes teares: or, Dirge of Dorcas", 'appears at first glance to have nothing to do with either the Church or persecution' (55).

<sup>27</sup> Vaughan H., *Henry Vaughan: The Complete Poems*, ed. A. Rudrum (Yale: 1981) 277–278.

<sup>28</sup> Wilcher R., *The Writing of Royalism* (Cambridge: 2001) 337.

logical rediscovery to have been “The Hidden Treasure”, the title of another Vaughan poem in *Silex*.<sup>29</sup> Royalism, it should be conceded, is always strictly encoded in *Urne-Buriall*; indeed, Browne was assiduous in misdirecting ill-intended would-be observers of its royalist imagery. Doubtless, as I have mentioned, this owed much to avoiding the attention of censors, but the probability is that he also derived, like Vaughan, a tangible and welcome sense of empowerment from employing the pervasive royalist motif of clandestineness, from betraying something of the ‘psychological need for secrecy’ which Lois Potter has identified in royalist writers of the mid-century.<sup>30</sup>

Allied, for both writers, to the politically charged notion of veiled potentiality is the theme of quietude or silence, another ubiquitous and influential idea in royalist writings of the English Revolution. Its kudos-carrying connotations of reflection, contemplation, and moral elevation are supplemented by a concomitant, implicit criticism of the inherent busyness, as royalist writers commonly perceived it, of successive, excessively law-making, Parliamentarian governments.<sup>31</sup> For Vaughan, quiet and silence provide virtuously contemplative conditions in which meditation on the true significance of death and burial – burial, pointedly, conducted according to the proscribed Book of Common Prayer – can flourish. In his elegy “Silence, and stealth of dayes!”, for example, possibly reflecting on the death of his brother, William, he ponders:

Silence, and stealth of dayes! 'tis now  
 Since thou art gone,  
 Twelve hundred hours, and not a brow  
 But clouds hang on  
 [...] .  
 So o'r fled minutes I retreat  
 Unto that hour  
 Which shew'd thee last [...] <sup>32</sup>

<sup>29</sup> These are themes also present in *Urne-Buriall*'s companion piece: Claire Preston comments that 'Browne's interest in seeds and generation, both literal and metaphorical, is the subject of *The Garden of Cyrus*' (Preston C., *Thomas Browne* 175).

<sup>30</sup> Potter L., *Secret Rites and Secret Writing: Royalist Literature 1641–1660* (Cambridge: 1987) xiii.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Richard Flecknoe's poem “The Ant” in *Miscellania, or Poems of all Sorts, with divers other Pieces* (London: 1653) 10–11.

<sup>32</sup> Vaughan H., *Poems* 180–181.

As Thomas Calhoun has noted, Vaughan, in his long sequence of such elegies in *Silex*, ‘sees himself as becoming part of the process that moves with the inevitability of a[n Anglican] ritual’.<sup>33</sup>

In *Urne-Buriall*, Browne attaches the merest, yet highly significant, hint of virtuous quiet to the bones on which he is ruminating when discussing the ultimate transience of burial in monuments above ground level: ‘He that lay in a golden Urne eminently above the Earth, was not likely to finde the quiet of these bones’ (1.152). The importance of ‘the quiet of these bones’ is accentuated by its appearance in a passage which, in keeping with the essay more generally, is unsentimental about the physical condition of dead bones; indeed, which is unashamedly clinical in its demystification of their material properties, and scathing about those who would associate such relics with supernatural powers:

What virtue yet sleeps in this *terra damnata* and aged cinders, were pretty magick to experiment; These crumbling reliques and long-fired particles superannuate such expectations: Bones, hairs, nails, and teeth of the dead, were the treasures of old Sorcerers. In vain we revive such practices; Present superstition too visibly perpetuates the folly of our Fore-fathers, wherein unto old Observation this Island was so compleat, that it might have instructed *Persia*. (1.153)

Yet the author still chooses to describe these misused and misconstrued bones, preserved by urn burial, as having ‘quiet’, if not inherently, then in their admirable persistence, undisturbed, below the surface. As such, and in going out of his way to reclaim them from would-be ‘Sorcerers’, Browne invests their condition with a residual virtue which, if inimical to superstition, reinforces the notion of the rediscovery and preservation of Royalism itself. Browne, that is, suggests there is a “survivalist” virtue in the bones’ lack of ostentation, that they win quiet through this virtue; in doing so, he implicitly commends to the reader the characteristic royalist literary theme of quietude and, by extension, retirement.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, for Browne the virtue associated with these bones casts abuse of such remains into bold relief: ‘To be gnaw’d out of our graves, to have our sculls made drinking-bowls, and our bones turned into pipes, to delight and sport our Enemies, are Tragicall abominations, escaped in burning Burials’ (1.155).

<sup>33</sup> Calhoun T., *Henry Vaughan: The Achievement of Silex Scintillans* (London and Toronto: 1981) 164.

<sup>34</sup> Post has identified a “survivalist” reading of *Urne-Buriall*: Post J., *Sir Thomas Browne* 132.

In *Urne-Buriall*'s dedication, it should be noted, Browne had already made a telling, and no less symbolic, reference to the silence of the bones on which he was to discourse:

We are coldly drawn unto discourses of Antiquities, who have scarce time before us to comprehend new things, or make out learned Novelties. But seeing they arose as they lay, almost in silence among us, at least in short account suddenly passed over, we were very unwilling they should die again, and be buried twice among us. (1.132)

In this passage, the antiquarian – and Browne includes himself in this – is reluctant, since understanding of the present times, let alone the ancient past, is challenging enough. Crucially, it is in part the symbolic silence of the urns which is invoked to justify the careful critical attention about to be paid to them in the essay, to ensure that they will not be overlooked again. What stirs the author to write this piece is that all the while, though 'among us', the urns have been literally and figuratively 'passed over' by learned authorities and the general public. Not only have they been neglected as important ancient relics in their own right, but also as potential symbols of royalist survival.

The silence of the urns thus comprises both passive and active elements, to provide a metaphor not simply for virtuously retired Royalism, but also for its involuntary defeat. Seen in this symbolic light, the urns' rediscovery takes on an undeniably religious (and equally political) aspect, to signify the ultimate conquering of defeat: the Resurrection, more overt references to which are found both in *Urne-Buriall*'s closing paragraphs and throughout *The Garden of Cyrus*. This signification is strengthened by the conspicuous absence of human agency: reference is made elsewhere in the essay to the active role of archaeologists. The urns were 'dug up' (1.140); yet in this passage Browne recounts how these relics 'arose as they lay', seemingly independent of human – and hence, like the Resurrection, dependent on divine – intervention.

Another implicit rhetoric of revival is found in Chapter IV, where Browne illustrates how, in contrast to Roman and Greek customs, 'Christians which deck their Coffins with Bays have found a more elegant Embleme. For that tree seeming dead will restore itself from the root, and its dry and exuccous leaves resume their verdure again' (1.159). Vaughan provides further examples of the Christian Resurrection being overlaid with the royalist and Anglican hopes of recovery, or at least of consolation. "Easter-Day", for instance, from *Silex Scintillans*, urges royalist sympathizers like the poet to cast off the despair of political defeat, as seen in the first verse:

Thou, whose sad heart, and weeping head lies low  
 Whose Cloudy brest cold damps invade,  
 Who never feel'st the Sun, nor smooth'st thy brow,  
 But sitt'st oppressed in the shade,  
 Awake, awake,  
 And in his Resurrection partake,  
 Who on this day (that thou might'st rise as he,)  
 Rose up, and cancell'd two deaths due to thee.<sup>35</sup>

In Vaughan's translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* (I.v), the motif of hiddenness, here mediated by burial, and blended with the equally partisan notion of innocence, is once more evident:

Only human actions thou  
 Hast no care of, but to the flow  
 And Ebb of Fortune leav'st them all  
 Hence the innocent endures that thrall  
 Due to the wicked, whilst alone  
 They sit possessors of his throne  
 The just are killed, and virtue lies  
 Buried in obscurities.<sup>36</sup>

The thematic resonance with *Urne-Buriall* is again inescapable. Just as, for Vaughan, reconciliation to Royalism's present parlous position is afforded by man's vulnerability to the Godless randomness of fortune, so, for Browne, 'the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy'. Where Vaughan avers that 'virtue lies buried in obscurities', Browne postulates that 'in vain we hope to be known by open and visible conservatories, when to be unknown was the means of their continuation and obscurity their protection', and, aphoristically capturing the very essence of the royalist credo in defeat, 'Happy are they whom privacy makes innocent' (1.167, 164, 170). Once more, then, both the individual and cumulative evidence is compelling: Browne, echoing the imagery and language of concealment and renewal copiously employed by Vaughan, proffers encoded advice and solace to those he holds to be the subjugated and marginalized of England in the 1650s. In doing so, he reveals far more about his royalist political sympathies during the English Revolution than has previously been recognized.

<sup>35</sup> Vaughan H., *Poems* 215.

<sup>36</sup> Vaughan H., *Poems* 114.

In the celebrated beginning to the fifth chapter of *Urne-Buriall*, Browne claims that:

these dead bones have already outlasted the living ones of Methusaleh, and in a yard underground, and thin walls of clay, outworn all the strong and specious buildings above it; and quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests. (1.164)

These are phrases packed with contemporary political meaning. The sub-text is that whatever the difficulties of present circumstances, Royalism and Anglicanism can, and will, eventually triumph, the military vocabulary of 'drums and tramplings' alluding at least in part to the recent Civil Wars. Noteworthy in particular is the suggestive symbolism in the urns lying merely 'a yard underground'; Royalism and Anglicanism may in the present political climate be buried, Browne implies, but, like the urns of Old Walsingham, they are only *just* below the surface; it is eminently conceivable that they will be recovered. On this reading, further contemporary significance may be inferred from Browne's urns lying not 'farre from one another' (1.140), with its connotation of royalist togetherness, friendship, and solidarity. Indeed, it is not too fanciful from this position to speculate that the elaborately detailed description of Roman, Norman, Saxon, and Danish finds over all parts of Britain is suggestive of the sizable numbers of royalist sympathizers lying underground across the country.

Although on one level a doleful analysis of decay, this is also an optimistic message of a political, as well as ancient and material, rediscovery and recovery which is almost at one's fingertips, a message that reinforces the opening lines of the essay, where Browne affirms that

In the deep discovery of the Subterranean world, a shallow part would satisfie some enquirers [...] The treasures of time lie high, in Urnes, Coynes, and Monuments, scarce below the roots of some vegetables [...] few have returned their bones farre lower than they might receive them. (1.135)

In this way, Browne can skilfully interweave with his ostensibly antiquarian, politically disinterested enquiries into burial practices of previous ages both the numbing reality of royalist defeat and the hope of its reversal.

As is readily apparent in the study of royalist and Anglican writings of this period, cross-currents of tension, like Browne's urns, are never far

from the surface, and *Urne-Buriall* proves no exception. For example, in framing his sentiments on royalist rehabilitation and resurgence within the overarching notion that 'Time hath endlesse rarities, and shows all varieties' (1.135), Browne betrays a reconciliation to the longer-term, consolatory, though also chastening idea that the downfall of the monarchy – and its flip-side, the present success of Parliament – was divinely sanctioned. In an era where the idea that success betokened moral right was common currency, the stream between accepting the reality of the country's new political and religious order and contemplating its overthrow could, as evidenced here, be a narrow one for the royalist and Anglican writer, covert or otherwise, to navigate.

The likelihood that Browne embraces the doubleness of this consolatory position in *Urne-Buriall* increases when we consider the last line of the opening paragraph in chapter one: 'That great Antiquity *America* lay buried for thousands of years; and a large part of the earth is still in the Urne unto us' (1.135). For the author, the rediscovery of urns and, by extension, of Royalism, is entirely possible, indeed – like the millennium – assured, since the urns lie 'scarce below the roots of some vegetables'; yet exactly *when* this rediscovery will take place is by no means certain. If *America* lay 'buried for thousands of years' before its unexpected discovery then Browne, even by 1658, has little reason to predict an imminent Restoration, however expected that event remains. That this duality – an emphasis on the continuing need to endure, combined with the prospect, however distant, of an end to suffering – is a commonplace both of recusant writing of the late sixteenth century and royalist writing of the mid-seventeenth century supports the argument that *Urne-Buriall* is in part a piece of consolatory retirement-resistance literature.

It is a duality explored, albeit in a more overtly devotional sense, by Vaughan in "Buriall", where the vagaries of time – engendering a sense of inevitability and unpredictability – offer both a comforting guarantee of eventual deliverance for the defeated adherents of the English Church, and an urgent reminder of the necessity of the Second Coming:

The world's thy boxe: how then (there tossed,  
Can I be lost?  
But the delay is all; Time now  
Is old, and slow,  
His wings are dull, and sickly;  
Yet he

Thy servant is, and waits on thee,  
 Cut then the sum,  
 Lord haste, Lord come,  
 O come Lord Jesus quickly!<sup>37</sup>

In “The Hidden Treasure”, too, Vaughan uses remarkably similar language to Browne to communicate, as Philip West has put it, his ‘honourable suspicions of artistic vanity’.<sup>38</sup> Vaughan’s specific target is not necessarily the self-indulgent monumentalism of burial practices with which Browne is concerned, yet the general thrust of his argument is nevertheless in a wider sense directed, like Browne’s, at man’s fruitless ‘searches’ for immortality, his doomed attempts at saving himself from oblivion:

And those I saw searched through; yea those and all  
 That these three thousand years time did let fall  
 To blind the eyes of lookers-back, and I  
 Now all is done, find all is vanity.  
 Those secret searches, which afflict the wise,  
 Paths that are hidden from the *vulture’s* eyes  
 I saw at a distance, and where grows that fruit  
 Which others only grope for and dispute.<sup>39</sup>

While continually casting a sceptical eye upon the efficacy of the customs they reflect, Browne, writing a philosophical and historical, rather than devotional, essay, places greater stress than Vaughan on the intrinsic importance of physical objects captured from the ancient past, as illustrated in the dedication:

Unto these of our Urnes none here can pretend relation [...] But remembering the early civility they brought upon these Countreys, and forgetting long passed mischeifs; We mercifully preserve their bones, and pissee not upon their ashes. (1.133)

Browne’s deep – if never unqualified – respect for the ancient past, evidenced here and in other passages of the dedication, such as ‘Tis opportune to look back upon old times, and contemplate our Forefathers’ (1.132), potentially constitutes another implicit royalist message. As I have mentioned, Parry has shown that works of history and antiquarianism were a common source of consolation and memorialization

<sup>37</sup> Vaughan H., *Poems* 183.

<sup>38</sup> West P., *Scripture Uses* 97.

<sup>39</sup> Vaughan H., *Poems* 287.

for Royalists in the 1640s and 1650s, a means of sublimating powerlessness into glory. Accordingly, the subject matter of *Urne-Buriall* may in itself have alerted Browne's contemporaries to the availability of a political reading. Yet as Derek Hirst has pointed out, in the struggle for cultural authority which characterized the 'war of the pen' in the English Revolution it is difficult for one group to legitimately claim a monopoly on any particular literary or artistic form, or even theme. An illustration of this is the fact that the celebrated antiquarian, William Dugdale (1605–1686), with whom Browne regularly corresponded in the 1650s, was patronized by the Parliamentarian Commander-in-Chief, Thomas Fairfax (1612–1671). Indeed, in both his secular and devotional poetry of the 1650s, composed while in retirement at his Nun Appleton estate, Fairfax showed that the puritan apprehension of the futility of human ambition in the face of time's eternity was just as acute as the royalist.<sup>40</sup>

## 5

In composing *Urne-Buriall*, then, Browne was living in a political and religious revolution whose demise he was to celebrate, and a contemporary literary landscape in which archaeology and antiquarianism could often prove a subtle casuistry of political activism. His essay is influenced in part by John Whitefoot's funeral sermon for Bishop Hall, which by association raises an unmistakably anti-puritan flag. It also exhibits arresting parallels with motifs central to Vaughan's poetry, such as regeneration, recovery and decay, unseen survival and growth, innocence and transience. Indeed, in a work where, as John Lepage has commented, the urns' 'contents must be reconstructed, resurrected, reborn',<sup>41</sup> there is sufficiently persuasive evidence provided by these analogies to conclude that *Urne-Buriall* is deeply rooted in the discreetly subversive survivalist literature of the Interregnum. Like his other works during this period – *Religio Medici* (first authorized edition 1643) and *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646), as well as *The Garden of Cyrus* –

<sup>40</sup> Hirst D., "Royalist Use of the Arts for Political Ends", *Seventeenth Century* 5 (1990) 133–155, here 142. For the fullest collection of Fairfax's literary works, see Reed E.B., *The Poems of Thomas Lord Fairfax* (New Haven, CT: 1909).

<sup>41</sup> Lepage J., "Kindled Spirits: Cremation and Urn Burial in Renaissance Literature", *English Literary Review* 28/1 (1998) 3–17, here 12.

the essay remains tantalizingly devoid of explicit references to its author's Royalism. Yet there is a strong case for stating that, like many other royalist writers of the mid-century, this did not prevent Browne from making his views legible to those with the will – and capacity – to decode them.

Browne distilled one of his overriding purposes in writing *Urne-Buriall* into the stated wish to 'preserve the living, and make the dead to live' (1.132). This has hitherto been interpreted as an appropriately lapidary and non-partisan comment, in a treatise concerned not with the strife of the English Civil Wars and Interregnum but with ancient beliefs as they are emblematised in the ceremonies of the grave. Viewed in the intensified political light cast by this essay, however, it is a sentiment which, like *Urne-Buriall* itself, reverberates with subversive royalist notions of survival, recovery, and ultimate victory.

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## THOMAS BROWNE AND THE ABSURDITIES OF MELANCHOLY

Karen L. Edwards

### 1

Thomas Browne's clear statement in *Religio Medici* (1642) that avarice is an expression of madness deflects attention from what he implies there about other expressions of madness:

to me avarice seemes not so much a vice, as a deplorable piece of madnesse; to conceive our selves Urinals, or bee perswaded that wee are dead, is not so ridiculous, nor so many degrees beyond the power of Hellebore, as this.<sup>1</sup>

The two conceits he offers as instances – imagining oneself to be a urinal, or dead – signify in early modern medical discourse the delusions brought on by melancholy, traditionally treated with hellebore. The implied equivalence between avarice and melancholy hints that Browne regards certain forms of melancholy as worthy of criticism or condemnation rather than compassion. A similarly critical tone is detectable in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, first published in 1646. There, in an early chapter cataloguing the causes of error, he declares:

if like Zeno [any man] shall walke about, and yet deny there is any motion in nature, surely it had been happy he had been born in Antycera, and is only fit to converse with their melancholies, who having a conceit that they are dead, cannot be convicted into the society of the living.<sup>2</sup>

Antycera, or Anticyra, was famous in antiquity for its hellebore; hence the city was reputed to attract the melancholic and the delusional.<sup>3</sup> Browne's sarcastic reference to 'their melancholies' – a form similar to those he employs for the unlearned (e.g. 'their vulgarities', 'their credulities') – disappears from subsequent editions of *Pseudodoxia* when the

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<sup>1</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici and Other Works*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: 1964) 73.

<sup>2</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (London: 1646) 18.

<sup>3</sup> See Hammond N.G.L. – Scullard H.H. (eds.), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: 1970) *s.v.* Anticyra.

passage is revised.<sup>4</sup> But a reader may still detect the dismissive tone.<sup>5</sup> It emerges again in a later chapter, when Browne considers the erroneous belief '[t]hat John the Evangelist should not dye' (*PE* 1.562). Twice in the chapter he calls it 'very strange' that anyone should hold an opinion 'so farre divided from reason' (*PE* 1.566). What ought to make the opinion untenable, he states, are 'the inconcealeable imperfections of our selves, or their dayly examples in others, [which] will hourelly prompt us our corruption, and lowdly tell us we are the sons of earth' (*PE* 1.567). To believe we cannot die is a 'bold' error, he declares, one not

usually falling either from the absurdities of Melancholy or vanities of ambition; some indeed have beene so affectedly vaine as to counterfeit Immortality, and have stolne their death in a hope to be esteemed immortall; and others have conceived themselves dead. (*PE* 1.567)

'The absurdities of Melancholy' is an unexpected phrase from a physician who claims that he has 'ever endeavoured to nourish the mercifull disposition, and humane inclination I borrowed from my Parents, and regulate it to the written and prescribed Lawes of Charity'.<sup>6</sup> Certainly Browne displays compassionate sympathy toward those writing to him for advice about their ill health, and it seems unlikely that he would exclude melancholics from the humane charity he extends to other sufferers.<sup>7</sup> We must assume that he is irritated by the delusions themselves – in particular, since he repeatedly returns to it, by the delusion that one is dead.

In contrast, he mentions conceiving oneself to be a urinal only once, in the passage from *Religio Medici* quoted above. He could have found this delusion in Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, listed among the 'impossible things' imagined by melancholic old women.<sup>8</sup> The conceit in any case touches on an aspect of his profession about which Browne, along with many of his contemporaries, is sceptical. Twice in

<sup>4</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. R. Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford: 1981) 1.19 (hereafter cited in text as *PE*).

<sup>5</sup> The revised passage reads as follows: 'if like Zeno [any man] shall walke about, and yet deny there is any motion in nature, surely that man was constituted for Antycera, and were a fit companion for those, who having a conceit they are dead, cannot be convicted into the society of the living' (*PE* 1.29).

<sup>6</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 55.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, the correspondence between Browne and Sir Hamon and Lady L'Estrange in Browne T., *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) 4.285–290.

<sup>8</sup> Scot R., *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London: 1584) 52.

*Pseudodoxia* he refers to uroscopy with some irony.<sup>9</sup> His slighting reference to imagining oneself to be a urinal may be part of this ironical vein – especially since, given the frequency with which patients' urine was studied by early modern physicians, regarding oneself as a urinal is possibly more a metaphor than a delusion. But the conceit that one is dead seems to elicit something stronger than irony on Browne's part. His tone approaches impatience, anger, perhaps even disgust. In this essay I will argue that Browne's attitude has historical significance: in the context of the deep divisions scarring England in the mid-seventeenth century, the disparaging representation of melancholic delusion has political implications.

## 2

For the source of the conceit that one is dead, it is logical to look first at the most important discussion of melancholy in the early modern period, Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, first published in 1621. Among his other self-imposed tasks, Burton (1577–1640) attempts to categorize kinds of delusions, which he calls 'symptoms' or 'signs' of melancholy, complaining that the task is so complicated that it defies completion.<sup>10</sup> A preliminary listing of delusions in the chapter entitled "Of the Force of Imagination" culminates in the conceit that Browne, too, fixes upon:

melancholy men, and sicke men conceive so many phantasticall visions, apparitions to themselves and have such absurd apparitions, as that they

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<sup>9</sup> See PE 1.2 and 1.19 and Robbins's note at PE 2.263.

<sup>10</sup> Burton resorts to biblical and classical analogies for the enormity of his task, analogies which themselves become standard features of medicine's inscription of madness in the later seventeenth century: 'The tower of *Babel* never yeeded such confusion of tongues, as this Chaos of melancholy doth variety of Symptomes'; 'The foure and twenty letters make no more variety of words in divers languages, then melancholy conceits produce diversity of symptomes.... *Proteus* himselfe is not so divers' (Burton R., *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, eds. T.C. Faulkner – N.K. Kiessling – R.L. Blair, 6 vols (Oxford: 1989–2000) 1.395 [1.3.1.2], 1.407 [1.3.1.4]). At the end of the seventeenth century, Thomas Sydenham borrows the analogy to Proteus in his description of hysteria, commenting that hysterical diseases are so varied and numerous in their symptoms that they take the form of all the diseases to which human beings are subject (Sydenham T., *The Whole Works*, trans. J. Pechey, 4th ed. (London: 1745) 307, 302).

are Kings, Lords, Cocks, Beares, Apes, Owls; that they are heavy, light, transparent, great, and little, senselesse and dead.<sup>11</sup>

It is possible that Browne's 'absurdities of melancholy' echoes Burton's 'absurd apparitions', though it is more likely that the phrases reflect a particular (and shared) attitude to melancholic delusion.<sup>12</sup> Under the category of symptoms deriving from "Parts of the Body, and Humours", Burton alludes again to the conceit of being dead, illustrating his point that if melancholic illness comes from 'melancholy itself adust', then the sufferers 'have most corrupt Imaginations'.<sup>13</sup> He elaborates:

*Laurentius cap. 7.* hath many stories of such as have thought themselves bewitched by their enimies; and some that would eate no meat as being dead. Anno 1550, an Advocate of *Paris* fell into such a melancholy fit, that he believed verily he was dead, hee could not be perswaded otherwise, or to eate or drinke, till a kinsman of his, a Scholler of *Bourges* did eate before him, dressed like a corse. The story, saith *Serres*, was acted in a *Comœdy* before *Charles* the ninth. Some think they are beasts, wolves, hogges and cry like dogges foxes, bray like asses, and low like kine.<sup>14</sup>

The enumeration of delusions, which is standard medical practice, continues in this fashion until Burton arrives finally at a story about a 'Gentleman in *Lymoser*' who believed 'hee had but one legge' until 'two *Franciscans* by chance comming that way, fully removed him from the conceipt'.<sup>15</sup> How the Franciscans did so is not explained, and Burton ends the chapter with a dismissive, or perhaps weary, sigh, 'Sed abundè fabularum audivimus' ('But we have heard quite enough stories').<sup>16</sup>

Burton's discussion of the corrupt imagination crucially reveals that the conceit of being dead, like the conceit of having only one leg, belongs

<sup>11</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 1.252 [1.2.3.2].

<sup>12</sup> Browne does not directly cite Burton in *Pseudodoxia* or *Religio Medici*, and *The Anatomy of Melancholy* is not listed in the *Catalogue of the Libraries of the Learned Sir Thomas Brown, and Dr. Edward Brown* (London: 1710). But Browne has a tendency not to acknowledge the works or authors to which he is most indebted; he makes no reference, for instance, to George Hakewill's *An Apologie [...] of the Power and Providence of God in the Government of the World* (first published in 1627), a work that underlies and may even have inspired *Pseudodoxia*. There is, moreover, a good likelihood that Browne knew of Burton, as they lived across the road from each other in Oxford for about four years. Browne was a student at Broadgates Hall (later Pembroke College) from 1623–1627; Broadgates was often used as a boarding house for students at Christ Church, Burton's institution.

<sup>13</sup> Burton cites Avicenna for this insight. 'Humours were said to be "adust" when they became heated and (in some sense) burnt up' (*Anatomy* 1.133; see note at 4.178).

<sup>14</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 1.401 [1.3.1.3].

<sup>15</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 1.403 [1.3.1.3].

<sup>16</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 1.403 [1.3.1.3]; see note at 5.50.

to *fabula* or popular narrative. Further exploration of Burton's sources reveals more about the cultural significance and role of such stories, crucial (as we shall see) for Browne's attitude to the delusions. André du Laurens (1558–1609), Burton's '*Laurentius*', includes the conceit in his own listing of delusions. Chapter 7 of his *Discours de la conservation de la veuë: des maladies melancholiques: des catarrhes: & de la vieillesse* (1597), translated by Richard Surphlet (fl. 1599–1616) as *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight; of Melancholike Diseases; of Rheumes, and of Old Age* (1599), contains '[h]istories of certaine melancholike persons, which haue had strange imaginations'.<sup>17</sup> The eighth history treats the delusion of being dead:

There haue been seene very melancholike persons, which did thinke themselues dead, and would not eate any thing: the Phisitions haue vsed this sleight to make them eate. They caused some one or other seruant to lie neere vnto the sickle partie, and hauing taught him to counterfeite himselfe dead, yet not to forsake his meate, but to eate and swallow it, when it was put into his mouth: and thus by this craftie deuise, they perswaded the melancholike man, that the dead did eate as well as those which are aliue.<sup>18</sup>

This history is recognizably that of the Parisian advocate, though it is probably not Burton's source, and despite the latter's marginal reference to 'Anthony de Verdeur' (1544–1600), the editors of *Anatomy* note that Antoine du Verdier's *Imagines deorum* does not include the story.<sup>19</sup> Nor can they find in the works of 'Serres' (Jean de Serres, 1540–1598) the fact that the advocate's story was enacted as a comedy before Charles IX.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Du Laurens A., *Discours de la conservation de la veuë: des maladies melancholiques: des catarrhes: & de la vieillesse* (Paris: 1597); *Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight; of Melancholike Diseases; of Rheumes, and of Old Age*, trans. R. Surphlet (London: 1599) 102. Du Laurens had been treating the Duchess of Uzés, who displayed symptoms of all the conditions discussed in the treatise. See Sanford V. Larkey's introduction to the facsimile edition of *A Discourse of the Preservation of the Sight* (London: 1938) v–xxv, for the circumstances in which du Laurens worked and wrote. Du Laurens does not name the sources of the 'histories' he includes in Chapter 7.

<sup>18</sup> Du Laurens A., *Discourse* 102.

<sup>19</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 1.401 (1.3.1.3); see note at 5.49. Du Verdier's *Imagines deorum* (Lyon: 1581) is a translation of Vincenzo Cartari's *Le immagini degli Dei degli antichi* (Venice: 1556).

<sup>20</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 5.49. Burton may be thinking, though mistakenly, of Serres's *Inventaire general de l'Histoire de France*, 3 vols (Paris: 1600), translated by Edward Grimestone and published in London in 1607 as *A General Inventory of the History of France [...] unto the yeare 1598*.

The story is, however, to be found in two other works known to Burton. Browne certainly knew one of these, Thomas Milles's *The Treasurie of Auncient and Moderne Times* (1613), to which he makes numerous references in *Pseudodoxia*, and he may also have known the other, Simon Goulart's (1543–1628) *Admirable and Memorable Histories Containing the Wonders of Our Time*, translated in 1607 by Edward Grimestone (fl. 1607–1634).<sup>21</sup> It is Milles (?1550–?1627) who states that the story was enacted before Charles IX.<sup>22</sup> As their titles indicate, both Milles's *Treasurie* and Goulart's *Histories* are collections or miscellanies of prose and poetry gathered from French, Spanish, and Italian authors, 'not onely diuine, morall and phylosophicall. But also poeticall, martiall, politicall, historicall, astrologicall, &c.', as Milles's title page puts it. (Du Verdier is among the authors represented in Milles's *Treasurie*, which may explain Burton's misattribution.) Both miscellanies contain elaborate but slightly different versions of the advocate's story. Milles's version (from which Burton probably drew) devotes considerable attention to the motivation and character of the advocate's wily nephew, studying law at Bourges. '[M]erry-minded Schollers', notes Milles, 'haue always a readinesse in wit, ioyfull without care, and a iouiall humour'.<sup>23</sup> Wrapping himself in a winding sheet, the nephew allows his uncle to see him first laughing and then eating a roasted capon with a pint of wine. His uncle is persuaded to try to laugh, and when that is successful, to call for food 'to try if he being dead, could eate as his fellow dead men did'.<sup>24</sup> Once the advocate begins to eat, drink, and engage in other normal activities, 'this Melancholy Cogitation, by little and little, left him'.<sup>25</sup> Goulart's version ascribes the advocate's cure to his friends, who devise a scheme whereby 'certaine men' dressed in shrouds enter his bedchamber and sit down to a good dinner. Eventually the advocate 'shakes his eares, leapes out of his bed, and begins to feede with these dead-men with

<sup>21</sup> Milles T., *The Treasurie of Auncient and Moderne Times* (London: 1613); Goulart S., *Admirable and Memorable Histories Containing the Wonders of Our Time*, trans. E. Grimestone (London: 1607). For evidence that Browne may have known Goulart's work (either in French or English), see PE 1.62 and 2.697. Goulart's *Trésor d'histoires admirables et mémorables de nostre temps* was first published in Paris in 1600.

<sup>22</sup> Milles T., *Treasurie* 478.

<sup>23</sup> Milles T., *Treasurie* 477.

<sup>24</sup> Milles T., *Treasurie* 478.

<sup>25</sup> Milles T., *Treasurie* 478.

a good stomache'.<sup>26</sup> The banqueting is followed by a long sleep, and when the advocate wakes up, his melancholy is gone.

The wealth of narrative detail available to all those who recount the story of the Parisian advocate is of no interest to Browne, nor does he seize upon variations in those details as grounds for aiming ironic or critical barbs. Indeed, he shows no curiosity whatsoever about the story's sources. Milles and Goulart themselves are careful to attribute the story to others, though the attributions are unreliable. Milles names as his source one Houllier, an unidentified physician; Goulart names the Dutch physician Levinus Lemnius (Lieven Lemmens) (1505–1568) and the Italian poet and humanist Jovianus Pontanus (Giovanni Pontano) (1426–1503).<sup>27</sup> Lemnius's *De habitu et constitutione corporis* (1561) was translated by Thomas Newton and published in 1576 as *The Touchstone of Complexions*.<sup>28</sup> Lemnius's protagonist is not an advocate but simply 'a certain Gentleman'.<sup>29</sup> The events of the story, claims Lemnius, took place 'even within our memory'<sup>30</sup> – a claim open to doubt, as Pontanus, who tells the same story, died in 1503. It is not necessary to search for Lemnius and Pontanus's sources and the sources of *their* sources in order to demonstrate that the story of the man who thought he was dead is an antique tale. It survives, we may assume, because it is popular, in both senses of the word. As such, it is available for dramatic treatment, and specifically for treatment as a comedy. The story of the man who thought he was dead does not end with the uniting of lovers, but it does end with the uniting of a man and his reason. More importantly, perhaps, it expresses and then vanquishes what is most frightening about being ill, the possibility that the illness will be fatal. It reassures us that dying (rather than being cured) is the delusion.

## 3

Yet the very way in which Browne evokes the conceit of being dead denies its basis in a comic narrative, a story with a happy ending. To

<sup>26</sup> Goulart S., *Histories* 374.

<sup>27</sup> Milles T., *Treasurie* 476; Goulart S., *Histories* 374.

<sup>28</sup> Lemnius L., *De habitu et constitutione corporis* (Antwerp: 1561); *The Touchstone of Complexions*, trans. T. Newton (London: 1576).

<sup>29</sup> Lemnius L., *Touchstone* 241.

<sup>30</sup> Lemnius L., *Touchstone* 241.

'bee perswaded that wee are dead', as he puts it in *Religio Medici*, reverses the story's plot, in which the advocate is persuaded that he is *not* dead. Similarly, the statement in *Pseudodoxia* that 'those [or, in the 1646 edition, 'their melancholies'] [...] having a conceit that they are dead, cannot be convicted into the society of the living', denies the story's point, which is that the delusional advocate is 'convicted into the society of the living' and restored to health through a benevolent trick.<sup>31</sup> Burton has no objection to such tricks, commenting that when other remedies fail to help melancholics, 'it is not amisse to deceive them'.<sup>32</sup> In a subsection entitled "Helpe from Friends by Counsell, Comfort, faire and foule Meanes, witty Devices, Satisfaction, alteration of his Course of Life, removing Objects, &c", Burton offers a series of stories in which delusion is instantly cured by a trick, as, for instance, a story found in du Laurens's *Discours*

of a Gentleman at *Senes* in *Italy*, who was afraid to pissee, least all the towne should be drowned, the Physitians caused the bells to be rung backward, and told him the towne was on fire, whereupon he made water, and was immediatly cured.<sup>33</sup>

Other tales of such tricks follow, and Burton concludes the chapter by remarking:

amongst the rest I finde one most memorable, registred in the French Chronicles, of an Advocate of *Paris* before mentioned, who beleeved verily hee was dead, &c. I read a multitude of examples, of Melancholy men cured by such artificiall inventions.<sup>34</sup>

What Burton unashamedly calls a 'trick' in these two stories and in the others he cites might well be called a dramatic performance, a comedy in which the melancholic is both unwitting actor and spectator. We recall that he reports the story of the Parisian advocate to have been 'acted in a Comedy before *Charles the ninth*'.

The essentially dramatic nature of the remedial tricks recommended by Burton is further demonstrated by the fact that three Shakespearean plays (a tragedy, a comedy, and a tragi-comedy) contain versions of such

<sup>31</sup> The term 'convicted', though Browne uses it here (and elsewhere in *Pseudodoxia*) to mean "convinced", may be a backhanded allusion to the advocate's profession. 'Convict' in this sense is relatively rare; it survived less than a century after its first recorded use in 1583 according to the *OED*, *s.v.* convict, *v.*, sense 5. (For another use of the term, see *PE* 1.7.)

<sup>32</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 2.111 [2.2.6.2].

<sup>33</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 2.112 [2.2.6.2].

<sup>34</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 2.112 [2.2.6.2].

‘tricks’. As Robert Weimann remarks, ‘[t]he quasi-dramatic culture of the folk is [...] important because it remained close to those forms of late ritual that the popular stage turned into effective conventions of dramatic speech and action’.<sup>35</sup> In *King Lear*, the blinded Gloucester is allowed to believe that he has survived a suicidal fall from a cliff. As Edgar explains, ‘Why I do trifle thus with his despair/Is done to cure it’, and Gloucester’s despair (another kind of blindness) is cured.<sup>36</sup> *Twelfth Night* contains a parodic and cruel version of the curative performance, when in Act IV Malvolio (who is ill not with melancholy but with self-love) is called ‘mad’, locked up, and subjected to the ministrations of Feste, disguised as Sir Topas the priest.<sup>37</sup> In *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, the Doctor diagnoses the Jailer’s Daughter as suffering from ‘a most thick and profound melancholy’ (5.1.42) and proposes as remedy a version of the conventional bed trick.<sup>38</sup> He advises the rustic Wooer to pretend to be the aristocratic Palamon, the man for whom the Jailer’s Daughter pines, and take her to bed. The Doctor explains:

It is a falsehood she is in, which is with falsehoods to be combated. This may bring her to eat, to sleep, and reduce what’s now out of square in her into their former law and regiment. I have seen it approved, how many times I know not. (5.1.79–83)

Whether the Jailer’s Daughter is cured of her melancholy is left unresolved; as Julia Briggs remarks, ‘[t]he audience cannot tell how far or how long she remains deceived’.<sup>39</sup> The ambiguous result and dubious morality of the trick played on the Jailer’s Daughter may well suggest that we are to regard it as a cynical ploy merely dressed up as a folk

<sup>35</sup> Weimann R., *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theatre: Studies in the Social Dimension of Dramatic Form and Function*, ed. R. Schwartz (Baltimore: 1978) 3. For Weimann’s consideration of the folk element in Shakespeare’s representation of madness, especially in *Hamlet*, see 120–133.

<sup>36</sup> Shakespeare W., *King Lear (Conflated Text)*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. S. Greenblatt et al. (New York: 1997) 4.6.33–34. All quotations to Shakespeare’s plays are to this edition and will be cited hereafter in the text by act, scene, and line numbers.

<sup>37</sup> Even Sir Toby, one of the perpetrators of the trick, acknowledges its cruelty: ‘I would we were well rid this knavery’, he says to Maria (*Twelfth Night* 4.2.66–67).

<sup>38</sup> Scholars now believe that Shakespeare was primarily responsible for the first and last acts of the play. The trick played upon the Jailer’s Daughter occurs in the last act. The conventional bed trick appears in two Shakespearean comedies, *All’s Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*.

<sup>39</sup> Briggs J., ‘Tears at the Wedding: Shakespeare’s Last Phase’ in Richards J. – Knowles J. (eds.), *Shakespeare’s Late Plays: New Readings* (Edinburgh: 1999) 210–227, here 224.

remedy, the point of which is to justify patriarchal appropriation of a young woman's virginity.

## 4

We cannot assume that Browne's obvious lack of interest in the comic narrative behind the conceit of being dead indicates scepticism about the possibility of curing melancholy. There is clear evidence that in the early modern period melancholic delusion was believed to be curable. In an essay challenging entrenched assumptions about Bethlem Hospital as a place in which mad people were locked away and treated not as patients but as spectacles (the "Bedlam stereotype"), Patricia Allderidge has reminded us that the hospital had claimed to *cure* insanity as early as the fifteenth century.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, she reports the case of Dr. Helkiah Crooke (1576–1648), author of *Microcosmographia*, who was investigated by the Privy Council in 1632 because (it was alleged) 'he had made no attempt to cure the distracted persons' at Bethlem – evidence, as she remarks, that 'it was clearly intended that he should do so'.<sup>41</sup> Certainly Robert Burton believed that delusional melancholy could be cured.<sup>42</sup> He provides chapter after chapter of remedies and 'rectifications' for melancholy.<sup>43</sup>

Let us consider instead the possibility that Browne's dislike of the conceit that one is dead stems from its popular nature, though not in a simple or direct way. His critical attitude towards popular conceptions and the erroneous assumptions that sustain them is, of course, fundamental to *Pseudodoxia*.<sup>44</sup> The attitude is expressed succinctly in the book's

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<sup>40</sup> Allderidge P., "Bedlam: Fact or Fantasy?", in Bynum W.F. – Porter R. – Shepheard M. (eds.), *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, 3 vols (London: 1985–1988) 1.17–33, here 29.

<sup>41</sup> Allderidge P., "Bedlam" 29.

<sup>42</sup> Angus Gowland observes that although Burton's therapeutic recommendations are broadly based on the Galenic principle of curing illness by 'the removal or counteraction of the pathological cause', there is nevertheless some tension with humoral theory, 'which did not allow for the real existence of a perfectly balanced and healthy state' (Gowland A., *The Worlds of Renaissance Melancholy: Robert Burton in Context* (Cambridge: 2006) 75–76).

<sup>43</sup> These are to be found in the Second Partition of the *Anatomy*, volume 2 of the Oxford edition.

<sup>44</sup> Unsurprisingly, Browne scarcely refers to contemporary plays and playwrights, although he may be quoting from *Macbeth* 5.5.47 in *Religio Medici*: 'mee thinks I have

famous running title, *Vulgar Errors*, and expansively in the book's third chapter, "Of the second cause of Popular Errors; the erroneous disposition of the people" (PE 1.15). Browne largely avoids discussing popular theological errors, yet the title of his book – *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: or, Enquiries into Very Many Received Tenents, and Commonly Presumed Truths* – seems to signal its kinship to such works as Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena: or a Catalogue and Discovery of Many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of This Time*, also published in 1646, and Robert Baillie's *Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time* and Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography: or a Description of the Heretickes and Sectaries of these Latter Times*, both published in 1645. The vulgar errors excoriated by Edwards (c. 1599–1648), Baillie (1599–1662), and Pagitt (1574–1646), are errors of theology, errors that appear to them to be newly hatched, errors they regard as peculiar to 'this time'. As Ann Hughes observes in her study of *Gangraena*, the mid-1640s was the point at which the growing power of the sectaries could no longer be denied; Edwards and his fellow Presbyterians 'witnessed with horror the multiplication of Independent and other separate congregations; the burgeoning of alarmingly heterodox ideas; and divisions and delays over the settling of church government'.<sup>45</sup> The works they produced in response are 'alarmist' and 'hectoring'.<sup>46</sup> *Gangraena*, in particular, is as much denunciation as heresiography.<sup>47</sup> In contrast, Browne's tone is supremely reasonable (albeit arch), ironic, playful, sceptical; his readers, he assumes (or pretends to assume), are as learned and as reasonable as he is. Moreover, the errors he exposes are ancient ones, arising from longstanding adherence to antiquity's pronouncements. Yet his title suggests that Browne sees *Pseudodoxia* as a kind of secular heresiography, as a work that shares the aim of *Gangraena*, the *Dissuasive*, and *Heresiography*: to rout out the errors now rampant in the population.

Those condemned by Edwards and fellow heresiographers as heretics and blasphemers are consistently called "mad", a term that for religious and political traditionalists has a very wide application in the mid-seventeenth century. Even those sympathetic towards stricter forms

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outlived my selfe, and begin to bee weary of the Sunne' (Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 39).

<sup>45</sup> Hughes A., *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford: 2004) 43.

<sup>46</sup> Hughes A., *Gangraena and the Struggle* 73.

<sup>47</sup> Hughes observes that *Gangraena* is too disorganized to be regarded as a true heresiography, a genre notable for its 'disciplined methodology and tight structure' (*Gangraena and the Struggle* 98).

of Puritanism recognized a connection between extreme melancholy or despair and a belief in predestination. Angus Gowland finds ‘the roots of the sociological association of radical Protestantism with suicide’ in the anxiety produced by meditating on one’s election. Even the followers of Luther, he remarks, charge Calvinists with ‘fostering melancholy through overemphasis on predestination’.<sup>48</sup> As Peter Lake observes, the English Church was broadly Calvinist from its inception, but this designation hides an ever-widening split between ‘credal’ predestinarians, who adhered to the doctrine of predestination but declined to preach it or allow it to shape their notion of the godly community, and ‘experimental’ predestinarians, who

wanted to place their view of predestination, election and assurance at the centre of their practical divinity, to erect a style of piety on foundations provided by a Calvinist doctrine of predestination, and to define the godly community [...] in terms of those who both understood the doctrines and acted upon them.<sup>49</sup>

Lake’s designation of them as “experimentalists” derives from their practice of experimental (or experiential) Bible reading, that is, the practice of searching the scripture for one’s “place”, for verses that seemed to speak to or leap out at the reader. Dayton Haskin explains that ‘[i]f a text was the right sort of place, that is, if it associated the reader with a biblical character who was saved, it offered “experimental” assurance of election. If it was not, its effects could induce despair’.<sup>50</sup> Calvinists, of course, insist on the difference between melancholy as an illness and the good despair by which God convicts a soul of its sinfulness and so brings it to repentance and salvation. The fact that Robert Burton negates this distinction, Gowland observes, gives ‘polemical force’ to his ‘innovatory conceptualization of religious melancholy’.<sup>51</sup> ‘The terrible meditation of

<sup>48</sup> Gowland A., *Renaissance Melancholy* 175; see the entirety of chapter 3, “Melancholy and Divinity” 139–204, for a thorough discussion of predestination and despair, with particular emphasis on Burton.

<sup>49</sup> Lake P., “Calvinism and the English Church 1570–1635”, *Past and Present* 114 (1987) 32–76, here 39. The split led, eventually, to Puritanism and radical sectarianism on the one hand, and Laudian Arminianism on the other. The most important study of this development is Tyacke N., *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c. 1590–1640* (Oxford: 1987).

<sup>50</sup> Haskin D., *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: 1994) 19. Burton lists the biblical places that were particularly known for producing despair (*Anatomy* 3.414 [3.4.2.3]).

<sup>51</sup> Gowland A., *Renaissance Melancholy* 177. For a quite different view of Burton’s notion of religious despair, see Stachniewski J., *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and*

hell fire and eternall punishment much torments a sinfull silly soule', declares Burton; it 'terrifies these poore distressed soules, especially if their bodies be predisposed by Melancholy'.<sup>52</sup> He points out that it is vulgar error – the 'misinterpretation' of such scriptural places as '*Many are called few are chosen*' – that leads to despair.<sup>53</sup> His diagnosis culminates in a passage that mixes compassion, frustration, and disgust:

election, predestination, reprobation, preposterously conceaveed offend diverse, with a deale of foolish presumption, curiosity, needlesse speculation, contemplation, sollicitude, wherein they trouble and pussle themselves about those questions of grace, freewill, perseverance, Gods secrets, they will knowe more then is revealed by God in his word, humane capacity, or ignorance can apprehend, and too importunate enquiry after that which is revealed; mysteries, ceremonies, observations of Sabbaoths, lawes, duties, &c. with many such which the Casuists discusse, and Schoolemen broach, which divers mistake, misconster, misapply to themselves, to their owne undoing, and so fall into this gulfe.<sup>54</sup>

Fear of damnation, Burton implies, leads many to a desperate attempt to penetrate divine mysteries and in that way to assure themselves of their salvation. The attempt is doomed; the 'gulfe' is not, of course, hell, but rather the living death that is melancholy.

## 5

In the fear of being damned, that dark concomitant of Calvinist individualism, we may find a reason for the persistence of the story of the man who thought he was dead. Was the Parisian advocate a Huguenot? It is impossible to say. But melancholy leads him to imagine himself in a literal version of the state feared by so many Protestants: that, unelected, they are passing their lives in a state of spiritual death. The melancholic conceit that Thomas Browne so clearly disapproves of, in other words, may be seen as a version of the religious despair that came in the seventeenth century to be associated with extreme Calvinist Protestantism. To come to the belief that one is doomed to eternal damnation is, in

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*the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: 1991) chapter 5, "Robert Burton and Religious Despair in Calvinist England" (219–253).

<sup>52</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 3.413–414 [3.4.2.3].

<sup>53</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 3.414 [3.4.2.3].

<sup>54</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 3.414 [3.4.2.3].

effect, to believe oneself to be dead. Even before Browne wrote *Pseudodoxia*, the madness associated with predestinarian despair had become more generally associated by the religious and political establishment with enthusiasm, the passionate expression of religious conviction – so passionate that it could be, and often was, called “madness”.<sup>55</sup> Because religious enthusiasm and radical or anti-establishment politics tended to coincide in the 1640s, the charge of madness had become fully political by the time *Pseudodoxia* was published.<sup>56</sup> Madness, notes Jonathan Sawday, was ‘associated with opposition to the king, itself a form of irreligion’.<sup>57</sup> He cites *Englands Mad Petition* (1647), an anonymous parody that ‘presents an image of a nation caught up in a kind of mass-suicide, intent on self-destruction’.<sup>58</sup> The parodic self-portrait of the petitioners makes it clear that England’s current madness is a blend of childishness, intoxication, illiterate ignorance, forgetfulness, and knavery:

Briefely (right Horrible) we your Petitioners, of all Ages, Sorts, Sizes, Sexes, Sects, and Complexions, have madly involved our selves in an (almost) universall Lunacie and Apostasie from God and our King; from Religion, to Sensualitie; from Virtue, to Vice; from Chastitie, to Lubricitie; from Christian Charitie, to Heathenish Crueltie; from Unitie, to Singularitie; from Pietie, to Hypocrisie; from Veritie, to Vanitie; from Humilitie, to Superbitie; from Moderation, to Ostentation; from the right understanding of Divine Mysteries, to blind Zeale without knowledge; and from the Path of Heaven, to the Wayes of Hell, eternall Death and Destruction.<sup>59</sup>

These are the qualities that Browne attributes to ‘the people’ in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. He designates their ‘erroneous disposition’ as the second cause of popular errors, the first being the universally ‘fallible’, or fallen, nature of human kind (PE 1.15). The chapter devoted to ‘their vulgarities’ – and “they” are, he notes, ‘the greater part of mankinde’ –

<sup>55</sup> See for instance Heyd M., ‘Be Sober and Reasonable’: *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden: 1995); Edwards K.L., “Inspiration and Melancholy in *Samson Agonistes*”, in Cummins J. (ed.), *Milton and the Ends of Time* (Cambridge: 2003) 224–240.

<sup>56</sup> There is a growing body of literature on madness and the English Civil War. Particularly illuminating are Sawday J., “‘Mysteriously divided’: Civil War, Madness and the Divided Self”, in Healy T. – Sawday J. (eds.), *Literature and the English Civil War* (Cambridge: 1990) 127–143; Kitzes A.H., *The Politics of Melancholy from Spenser to Milton* (New York: 2006) chapter 6, “The Distractions of the Times: Ideologies of Madness and Disease During the Civil War and Interregnum” 153–173; and Gowland A., *Renaissance Melancholy*, chapter 4, “The Melancholy Body Politic” 205–245.

<sup>57</sup> Sawday J., “‘Mysteriously divided” 128.

<sup>58</sup> Sawday J., “‘Mysteriously divided” 127.

<sup>59</sup> [Anon.], *Englands Mad Petition* (London: 1647) 3–4.

becomes steadily more savage. He arrives finally at a description of what we might call today mob behaviour (*PE* 1.19, 1.15):

their individuall imperfections being great, they are moreover enlarged by their aggregation, and being erroneous in their single numbers, once huddled together, they will be errorr it selfe; for being a confusion of knaves and fooles, and a farraginous concurrence of all conditions, tempers, sex, and ages, it is but naturall if their determinations be monstrous, and many wayes inconsistent with truth. (*PE* 1.17)

Claire Preston has argued that by ‘vulgar’ Browne refers not to low social class but to poor qualities of ‘judgement, wisdom, and discrimination’, a more modern sense of the word.<sup>60</sup> In practice, however, it proves very difficult, if not impossible, to retain such a distinction. Preston acknowledges the presence of ‘the usual Brownean watchwords: “promiscuous”, “swarm”, the imagery of gorging’.<sup>61</sup> But these terms are not merely Brownean; they are the linguistic markers of royalist distaste for the hydra-headed monster, the politically and religiously radical common people.<sup>62</sup> Even in their individuality, Browne states, they are dominated by ‘their appetite, that is, the irrational and brutall part of the soule’ (*PE* 1.17). They are mad in that they are not governed by their reason. Browne’s politics manifests itself in his tone; there is no compassion here, only disapproval and condemnation. The tone is akin to the tone in which he writes of the ‘absurdities’ of melancholy, for, I am arguing, the subject is the same. From the perspective of the Anglican and royalist Browne, radical Puritanism fails the test of what is reasonable. Fearing one’s reprobation is but the other side of glorying in one’s election. It is as blasphemous to believe oneself to be dead as to take up arms against God’s anointed. Both replace humble faith in divine providence with a mad and idolatrous pride in one’s own understanding. Absurdly and terribly, both turn the world upside down.

<sup>60</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) 84. For her extended argument see 82–89.

<sup>61</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne* 87.

<sup>62</sup> See Poole K., “Dissecting Sectarianism: Liberty of Conscience, the Swarm, and Thomas Edwards’s *Gangraena*” in Boesky A. – Crane M.T. (eds.), *Form and Reform in Renaissance England: Essays in Honor of Barbara Kiefer Lewalski* (Newark: 2000) 45–69; Hill C., “The Many-Headed Monster” in *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: 1974) 181–204.

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PART V  
READING AND TRANSLATING BROWNE



## THE CHRISTIAN PHYSICIAN: THOMAS BROWNE AND THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN MEDICAL PRACTICE

Mary Ann Lund

The title of Thomas Browne's first work, *Religio Medici* (first published 1642), plays on what he calls the 'generall scandall of my profession',<sup>1</sup> according to the medieval proverb that *ubi tres medici, duo athei* (where there are three physicians, there are two atheists). Browne shows that at least one doctor has religious belief by providing a personal account of the nature of his Christian faith. While the work has received substantial critical attention, the implications of its title have not been fully addressed. This essay asks what the relationship is between 'religio' and 'medici' in the writings of Browne, exploring the connection between his Christian beliefs and his understanding of medical vocation in both his printed and manuscript writings, from *Religio Medici* to the posthumously published work *A Letter to a Friend* (1690). It also examines evidence of Browne's reputation in the seventeenth century, and contends that he provided an influential example for those who wished to stress the religious and moral duties of the good physician.

Illness and its cure were closely identified with religious experience in early modern England, as recent work in the field of medical history has shown.<sup>2</sup> Firstly, treatment of illness was not solely the province of medical professionals: various types of unlicensed healers, including parish ministers (especially in rural locations), were often called upon to help the sick. Secondly, links between illness and vice, and between care for the soul and physical healing, were often made in early modern English writing, more commonly by religious than medical writers.<sup>3</sup> Throughout Browne's lifetime, the authors of moralizing treatises continued to assert that physical ailments were caused by sin, and that

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<sup>1</sup> Browne T., *The Works of Sir Thomas Browne*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) 1.11. References to Browne's works hereafter are to this edition and given in text.

<sup>2</sup> The most useful introduction to the subject is Wear A., "Religious Beliefs and Medicine in Early Modern England" in Marland H. – Pelling M. (eds.), *The Task of Healing: Medicine, Religion and Gender in England and the Netherlands, 1450–1800* (Rotterdam: 1996) 145–169.

<sup>3</sup> Wear A., "Religious Beliefs and Medicine" 151.

the soul and the body had a powerful influence on each other. As a result, a mixed form of healing which paid attention to the health of both soul and body was encouraged. Although clerical writers took great care to stress the spiritual dimension of physical cure, some also emphasized the need for medical treatment in cases of spiritual distress. The godly minister Richard Greenham (early 1540s–1594), for example, encouraged divines and physicians to work together in aiding those who suffered from a troubled conscience.<sup>4</sup> Robert Burton (1577–1640), author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) and also a minister, argued that the two professions:

differ but in object, the one of the Body, the other of the Soule, and use divers medicines to cure: one amends *animam per corpus*, the other *corpus per animam*, as our Regius Professor of Physicke well informed us in a learned Lecture of his not long since.<sup>5</sup>

The congruity between religion and medicine was hence well established by Browne's time. Burton's words have a particular relevance to the study of Browne in his reference to the Regius Professor of Physic, Dr. Thomas Clayton (1575–1647), who was principal of Broadgates Hall from 1620, and subsequently first master when it became Pembroke College.<sup>6</sup> Browne attended the college as an undergraduate during this time and was very probably influenced by Clayton, even though he was not, of course, a student of medicine. Although he was not ordained, Clayton was remembered in Oxford as a 'good Divine [...] and this his skill he did so seasonably exercise towards his Patients, that it rendred him worthy of double honour'.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps Clayton not only interested Browne in medicine as a profession, but also formed his early understanding of what his vocation involved.

<sup>4</sup> Greenham R., *The Workes of [...] Richard Greenham* (London: 1599) 256.

<sup>5</sup> Burton R., *The Anatomy of Melancholy* eds. T.C. Faulkner – N.K. Kiessling – R.L. Blair, 6 vols (Oxford: 1989–2000) 1.22. On Burton, see Lund M.A., "Robert Burton the Spiritual Physician: Religion and Medicine in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*", *Review of English Studies* 57 (2006) 665–683.

<sup>6</sup> Frank R.G., Jr., "Medicine" in Tyacke N. (ed.), *The History of the University of Oxford Vol. IV: Seventeenth-Century Oxford* (Oxford: 1997) 505–558, here 517–518.

<sup>7</sup> Savage H., *Balliogerus* (Oxford: 1668) 117. Browne gave the undergraduate oration at the inauguration of Pembroke College in 1624, the text of which is included in *Balliogerus*. Browne also knew Clayton's son, Sir Thomas Clayton (1612–1693), also Regius Professor of Physic, and Warden of Merton, whose medical abilities were widely criticized. See Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.118.

### 1. Religio Medici

For much of *Religio Medici* we see little of Browne the doctor, who at the time of writing in the mid-1630s had completed his medical studies in Montpellier, Padua, and Leiden, and was probably practising in Halifax, Yorkshire. Most of the work presents the author as a pious but independently-minded, sceptical thinker, interested in philosophical, theological and scientific enquiry. However, occasional references give the reader more specific reminders of Browne's profession. For example, he tells the reader that 'there appeares to mee as much divinity in Galen his books *De usu partium*, as in Suarez Metaphysics' (1.24). This notion of divinity being revealed through anatomy (Galen's book was the standard textbook on the subject) is fairly commonplace in a period when dissections were accompanied by prayers and exhortations to those who witnessed them to observe God's handiwork.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, it gives one indication of how for Browne personal belief is furthered by his medical knowledge of human bodies, rather than by philosophical enquiry into first principles (as epitomized by Francisco Suárez's *Disputationes Metaphysicae* (1597)). As Andrew Cunningham has argued, Browne does not acknowledge any kind of separation between religion and natural investigation, but rather sees one as reinforcing the other, nature providing an 'additional and complementary route to God'.<sup>9</sup> Later in *Religio Medici* he gives a glimpse of what is the primary concern of this essay, the role played by religion in the practice of medicine, during a discussion about charity towards others' spiritual states. Browne claims that 'I cannot goe to cure the body of my Patient, but I forget my profession, and call unto God for his soule' (1.79). Medical visits become for Browne an opportunity for intercessory prayer. But is this activity really a "forgetting" of his profession? If, as the proverb suggests, atheism is typical of his

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<sup>8</sup> This was, for example, the case in Leiden's anatomy theatre; see Schoneveld C.W., "Sir Thomas Browne and Leiden University in 1633" in Schoeck R.J. (ed.) *Sir Thomas Browne and the Republic of Letters. English Language Notes* 19 (1982) 335–359, here 354. On references to Galen in relation to natural theology, see Rivers I., "Galen's Muscles": Wilkins, Hume, and the Educational Use of the Argument from Design", *Historical Journal* 36 (1993) 557–597, here 585–586.

<sup>9</sup> Cunningham A., "Sir Thomas Browne and his *Religio Medici*: Reason, Nature, and Religion", in Grell O.P. – Cunningham A. (eds), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot: 1996) 12–61, here 50–51.

occupation, then prayer has no traditional place in the physician's rounds. However, if Browne's aim in his autobiographical exploration of a doctor's religion is to create a stronger association between medicine and belief, then his remark about forgetting his profession may be less straightforward than it seems.

Prayer for the patient may be for Browne not a departure from but an integral part of his vocation. Evidence from one of his commonplace books supports this suggestion: a note about religious duties, written for himself or perhaps as guidance for his son Edward (1644–1708) (also a physician), includes the direction:

To pray dayly and particularly for sick patients, & in generall for othes, wheresoever, howsoever, under whose care soever, & at the entrance into the house of the sick to say, the peace and mercy of god bee in this place. (3.325)

The instruction combines the general duty of the Christian to pray for the sick with the doctor's vocational responsibility towards those in his care, as suggested by the phrase 'particularly for sick patients'. It also implies that Browne conducted his visits in an ordered, even ritualistic, way. His words for the 'entrance into the house of the sick' bear an intriguing echo of the *Book of Common Prayer*'s "Order for the Visitation of the Sick", intended for ministers rather than physicians: the clergyman's first words as he enters a sick person's house are 'Peace be to this house, and to all that dwell in it'.<sup>10</sup> Andrew Wear has pointed out that most physicians had little concern with the substance of religion, and that 'at the bedside there was usually no mention of a religious ceremony associated with medical treatment'.<sup>11</sup> Browne is unusual, then, in including a Christian element in visits, and one which imitates the ecclesiastical rite. Interestingly, a later writer who was strongly influenced by Browne, Henry Atherton (1649–1695) (his work will be discussed later), concludes his set of instructions on how pious doctors should behave with a "Physicians Prayer", to be uttered every morning or when treating a patient, and another prayer to be recited "When you enter into the Sick Persons Chamber".<sup>12</sup> Perhaps Browne's example of the doctor praying for his patient was a model for others, or at least brought the notion of Christian "bedside manner"

<sup>10</sup> *The Booke of Common Prayer* (London: 1634) [P8]v.

<sup>11</sup> Wear A, "Religious Beliefs and Medicine" 154.

<sup>12</sup> Atherton H., *The Christian Physician* (London: 1683) 92.

to prominence. As Andrew Cunningham has said, *Religio Medici* ‘made the religion of physicians an issue, and made Browne himself the most famous physician to have had a religion’.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, it provided a model of the Christian physician in action.

*Religio Medici* is not a book of guidelines about the religious duties of the ideal physician. Indeed, Browne stresses that the work does not provide ‘an example or rule unto any other’ (1.10). In the discussion that follows this point should be borne in mind, as my argument is not that the text’s reception during the seventeenth century corresponds with Browne’s aims in the initial composition of his work. It would be a serious overstatement to claim that the governing purpose of *Religio Medici* is to show its readers that the good doctor should be a good Christian; such a reading imposes too narrow and unified an outlook on a work which is, as Claire Preston has argued, disorganized and unruly.<sup>14</sup> However, Browne’s account of faith represented for many English readers a portrait of the model Christian doctor, and brought to public attention questions about the nature of medical vocation. Although Browne shows himself as the practising doctor in the text only occasionally, many of his readers never forgot that fact, interpreting the text in the light of his medical profession.

## 2. Browne’s Medical Imitators

The publication of *Religio Medici* spawned a succession of imitators who adapted the work’s memorable title to match their own profession and status: *Religio Laici*, *Religio Bibliopolae*, *Religio Jurisprudentis*, *Religio Militis*. These have been documented by Sir Geoffrey Keynes in his bibliography of Browne, and supplemented by Daniela Harenstein.<sup>15</sup> What has been overlooked, however, is another, smaller group of imitators who responded to the work’s twin themes of medicine and religion. *The Religion of Physicians* (1663) by Edmund Gayton (1608–1666), J. H.’s *The Divine Physician* (1676) (the *English Short Title Catalogue* identifies the

<sup>13</sup> Cunningham A., “Sir Thomas Browne” 12.

<sup>14</sup> See Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) 51–55.

<sup>15</sup> Keynes G., *A Bibliography of Sir Thomas Browne Kt. M.D.*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: 1968) Appendix 1; Harenstein D., *Democratizing Sir Thomas Browne: Religio Medici and Its Imitations* (Oxford: 1999).

author as John Harris), and Henry Atherton's *The Christian Physician* (1683) all echo Browne's work in their titles, although only Gayton's work is listed in Keynes's catalogue. All take advantage of, while at the same time cementing, Browne's reputation as a Christian doctor. Browne stands as an inspiration for works which are in themselves very different: Gayton's text is a series of meditative poems on festivals in the Church calendar, Harris's is a treatise on the spiritual causes of physical diseases, and Atherton's is a series of instructions on the Christian duties of the physician, along with general directions on living a godly life.

Edmund Gayton, identified on his work's title-page as a Bachelor of Physic, makes explicit his debt to *Religio Medici*, explaining in his preface that he borrows his title from

Doctor Brown, an able Artist in that Faculty: To whom, for that and his *Vulgar Errors*, the world stands still engaged and obliged. I do not do it for this end and purpose, that either in *Physick*, wherein he was admirable, or in *Theologie*, wherein he was curious, I should match my selfe with him, or labour to out-vie him.<sup>16</sup>

One would assume from this passage that Gayton does not know Browne personally (his use of the past tense implies that Browne is dead) and that, therefore, his only knowledge of the author is through his texts and public reputation. Certainly, his description of Browne as being 'curious' in theology – the adjective could suggest that he was inquisitive about, studious or skilful in the subject – well applies to Browne's discussions of doctrine in the first part of *Religio Medici*.<sup>17</sup> The rest of the preface continues to assert the author's belief in a close and even necessary intersection between medical practice and religion, a belief which is represented for him by Browne, the 'able Artist in that Faculty'. Gayton's poem "Upon Saint Lukes Day, Physician and Evangelist" continues the allusions to Browne's work as it rejects the charge of atheism against doctors, arguing instead for their status as God's agents: 'when an Evangelist/Of a Physitian's made, who can deny/This to be true *Religio Medici*?'<sup>18</sup> Although a witty poem published in the next year claimed that 'Physick and preaching ill agree,/There is but one *Religio Medici*' (Alexander Brome's "The Answer", responding to a previous

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<sup>16</sup> Gayton E., *The Religion of a Physician* (London: 1663) [(a4)]<sup>r-v</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> *OED* s.v. "curious," I, 1.a, 5.a., 6.a.

<sup>18</sup> Gayton E., *Religion* 54.

poem advising a young man to be both cleric and doctor), Browne's work was for Gayton a byword for Christian medical vocation.<sup>19</sup>

Of Browne's medical imitators, the most interesting case is Henry Atherton, a Newcastle physician who in 1683 once more sets out to cast off the charge of atheism against his profession. The text is interesting in itself as a rare and systematic attempt, by a doctor rather than a minister, to describe the Christian and more broadly moral duties of the good physician. He argues that a holy and virtuous life is necessary, firstly for a doctor's 'good success in Practice' (as God will reward those who are pious) and secondly because his prayers will help his patients: 'we know not what efficacy the Prayers of holy and good Physicians may have for the procuring Gods Blessing on their Endeavours, if not for the protraction of the lives of their Patients'.<sup>20</sup> From being a "forgetting" of one's profession, intercessory prayer has become an essential part of it. Atherton is clearly influenced by Browne in his writing and in his theological outlook. For example, he not only follows but also borrows from Browne in his claim that God's greatness is better revealed to the observer in small things than big:

"Tis not the Magnitude of the Piece that commends the Artificer; there was more Art shewn in the small Fly of *Regiomontanus*, than in the Mold of his great bodied Eagle: There is more Skill, Chymistry and Mathematicks, in one single Bee, than in the whole Republick of Elephants and Dromedaries.<sup>21</sup>

This bears a close resemblance to Browne's words in *Religio Medici*:

ruder heads stand amazed at those prodigious pieces of nature, Whales, Elephants, Dromidaries, and Camels; these I confesse, are the Colossus and Majestick pieces of her hand; but in these narrow Engines there is more curious Mathematicks, and the civilitie of these little Citizens, more neatly sets forth the wisedome of their Maker; Who admires not *Regiomontanus* his Fly beyond his Eagle [...]? (1.24)

The idea expressed in these extracts is not original to Browne, being found earlier in Vives, Augustine, and Pliny the Elder, yet it is interesting to note that Atherton finds this theology of nature particularly appropriate for a physician; the close attention to small detail is suggestive

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<sup>19</sup> Brome A., *Songs and Other Poems* (London: 1664) 199.

<sup>20</sup> Atherton H., *Christian Physician* 76, 77.

<sup>21</sup> Atherton H., *Christian Physician* 34.

of the physician's skills of observation, as well as his interest in natural phenomena.

Atherton's text gives a series of guidelines on how the virtuous doctor should conduct himself: his four main instructions are to pray for the gift of good judgement and God's blessing before every case, to prescribe carefully, not to promise cures in cases where the patient is likely to die (and may not be adequately prepared for death), and finally to attribute all successes to God rather than to one's own skill.<sup>22</sup> Although he firstly insists that 'Physicians are only to take care of the Body and the Divine of the Soul' (and therefore should not supplant one another) he moves on to point out that the former often has 'many better opportunities' than the latter to encourage patients towards repentance, especially near death, since the minister 'is seldom so early or so often advised with as the Physician'.<sup>23</sup> This admission about the doctor's sway over the patient is reminiscent of Browne's claim that

I can cure the gout or stone in some, sooner than Divinity, Pride, or Avarice in others. I can cure vices by Physicke, when they remaine incurable by Divinity, and shall obey my pils, when they contemne their precepts. (1.85)

Browne first draws a contrast between physical and spiritual types of affliction and cure, then interchanges them: by taking care of the body's ailments the doctor can also improve the patient's moral state. As with Atherton, Browne's aim is not to criticize the methods of ministers, but instead to focus attention on the patient's attitude to his or her healer. The words 'shall obey' apply, according to the grammar of the sentence, to the vices themselves, but are also connected by implication to patients who lead vicious lives. Medical relief from the unpleasant physical consequences of bad living can prompt the sufferer towards repentance, when words of moral exhortation cannot. The minister Richard Baxter (1615–1691) makes a very similar point when he urges doctors to exercise compassion and charity towards their patients' souls. Doctors have 'excellent opportunities' to prepare patients for death because the ill are more likely to listen, and therefore doctors may be able to encourage their 'conversion and salvation'; moreover, 'many a man will send for the Physician, that will not send for the Pastor: And many a one will hear a *Physicion* that will despise the Pastor'.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> For a comparable set of instructions by a minister, see Richard Baxter's chapter on "The Duty of Physicians" in *A Christian Directory* (London: 1673) 42–43.

<sup>23</sup> Atherton H., *Christian Physician* 88, 89.

<sup>24</sup> Baxter R., *Christian Directory* 43.

Hence for both Browne and Atherton the doctor's position at the bedside is seen as a means of helping the patient spiritually as well as physically. Moreover, both place emphasis on the virtue of charity in this activity. Browne's words (quoted above) feature in the second part of *Religio Medici*, which takes charity as its theme, and follow an assertion that he does not feel 'those sordid, and unchristian desires of my profession' (1.84) in wishing for catastrophes that will bring him more patients; he feels sorrow that some diseases are incurable 'not for my own sake, or that they be beyond my art, but for the general cause & sake of humanity' (1.85). Atherton, meanwhile, admits that the physician is not so obliged to attend to his patient's spiritual state as a minister is, but adds that 'even he cannot be excused in point of charity'. This focus on the doctor's charity is highlighted in much writing on the profession's moral and Christian responsibilities, especially in relation to the question of fees; doctors were urged to help those too poor to afford their fees, although still fully entitled to seek payment from their wealthier clients.<sup>25</sup>

The similarities between Browne's and Atherton's texts show how, despite the desire expressed in *Religio Medici*'s preface that his work be read only as a 'private exercise' (1.10), Browne's work did serve as an example to others: the figure of the Christian physician which he represented created an influential model, which was taken up by other writers as they instructed in the art of Christian medicine. Time and again Browne himself or his works are invoked in such discussions. Obadiah Walker (1616–1699), for example, arguing against the well-worn proverb about atheist doctors, notes that '*Religio Medici* is not the product of the Penne alone, but also of the Practice of *Physitians*'. Rather than prompting atheism, he argues, medicine 'is signally advantagious to an holy life', and supports his argument by quoting from the dedicatory epistle of *Urne-Buriall*, that '[t]he study of *Physitians* is Life and Death: they of all men least need artificial memento's, or Coffins by their Bedsides, to mind them of their Graves'.<sup>26</sup> Walker, who is clearly familiar with Browne's work (and takes advantage of its success in writing a book

<sup>25</sup> See Baxter R., *Christian Directory* 42; Wear A., "Religious Beliefs and Medicine" 162–163.

<sup>26</sup> Walker O., *Perimma Epidemion, or Vulgar Errors in Practice Censured* (London: 1659) 25, 28. Cf. *Urne-Buriall* in Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes (1.132).

of ‘Vulgar Errors’) uses it to defend the medical profession. Another doctor and writer, Christopher Merrett (1614–1695), describing the characteristics and accomplishments of the ideal physician, adds to his list of requirements that

his Religion and Morality are to be considered. As for the former he hath woven into his Practice the *Religio Medici* of that famous Person, and Honour too of this Art, Sir *Thomas Brown* of *Norwich*, to whom I recommend the Reader.<sup>27</sup>

Merrett advises that *Religio Medici* be read in an active fashion, its words being used as guidelines for the ‘Practice’ of others. We know that Merrett writes with the privilege of personal knowledge: some of the correspondence between Browne and Merrett survives, in which the two doctors exchange information about flora and fauna (and send one another specimens).<sup>28</sup> The way in which Merrett identifies the author with his book is thus of particular interest. At first he recommends the text as a handbook for doctors on how personal religion can be incorporated into their sense of vocation. Then he recommends Browne himself (as the words ‘to whom’ indicate) to the reader, presumably considering that the author’s own life is representative of an ideal “religio medici”. Merrett’s comment shows Browne operating in his profession as the Christian doctor, and also supports the suggestion that *Religio Medici* was read during the seventeenth century as a model text for those who believed that ‘Religion and Morality’ were important attributes in good physicians.

There is in Henry Atherton’s work an allusion to an English Christian doctor which, if I am correct in my attribution, is another important (and hitherto unnoticed) reference to Browne’s reputation as doctor and author, and an early posthumous tribute to him. In his preface, Atherton lists some of the ‘many Men truly pious in this Profession’, starting with Hippocrates as the pre-Christian ‘Divine’ physician *par excellence*. After Galen, Averroës, and Avicenna, he adds that ‘we lately had a more modern *Hippocrates* both of this Age and Nation, who amongst other sweet Odours to perfume his Memory, hath this, that he was *In toto Vitae statu Christianus*'.<sup>29</sup> We know that Atherton has read *Religio Medici* and is, surely, imitating it in his own work’s title. Browne is the most likely

<sup>27</sup> Merrett C., *The Character of a Compleat Physician, or Naturalist* (London: 1680) 6.

<sup>28</sup> See Browne T., *Works* ed. Keynes, 4.340–362.

<sup>29</sup> Atherton H., *The Christian Physician* A4<sup>v</sup>.

candidate for a doctor who is well known, English, recently deceased, and particularly renowned for his Christian beliefs.<sup>30</sup>

The preface is dated 2 November 1682. Could Atherton have heard of Browne's death on 19 October by this time? He may have heard about it from a correspondent, especially if he had some connection with Browne's circle. Even if not, however, the news was already public knowledge. *The True Protestant Mercury* for 25 October reported Browne's death as its second news item:

*Norwich Octob 20. Yesterday Died the Eminently Learned and Loyal Sir Thomas Browne, Doctor of Physick, well known by his Learned Works, particularly his *Religio Medici* so well approved of at home, and Translated into most Languages abroad.*<sup>31</sup>

This announcement of his death, unknown in Browne scholarship (as far as I am aware) until now, may well have been Atherton's source, and also shows that Browne was still a prominent figure. Although modern readers of Browne tend to think of him as an author of the mid-century, his fame in the seventeenth century continued long after the publication of his major literary works; moreover, his reputation as a doctor '*In toto Vitae statu Christianus*' continued to be invoked during the final years of his life and after (Merrett's work was published in 1680, Atherton's in 1683). Harold Cook has argued that the professional authority of early modern physicians was seen to be based on sound judgement and strong moral character, but by the late seventeenth century these values had given way to a more utilitarian stress on practical efficacy in cure and the social status of the doctor.<sup>32</sup> In this light, Atherton and Merrett's examinations of the physician's moral responsibilities can be seen as attempts to sustain the older values of professional medicine, with Browne as its exemplar, in the face of changing ideas about medical practice. *Religio Medici*, in particular, remained not only a popular text but also a potent example for those who wished to promote the place of Christian belief in the profession.

<sup>30</sup> I am grateful to Margaret Pelling and Harold Cook for advice about this identification. Another possible candidate is Thomas Willis, who died in 1675. Since Atherton uses the word 'lately', though, Browne is the more likely choice.

<sup>31</sup> *The True Protestant Mercury; or, Occurrences Foreign and Domestick*, 188 (Wednesday 25 October 1682).

<sup>32</sup> Cook H.J., "Good Advice and Little Medicine: The Professional Authority of Early Modern English Physicians", *Journal of British Studies* 22 (1994) 1–31.

### 3. A Letter to a Friend

Browne's printed works and life forged his long-standing reputation as the epitome of the Christian doctor, especially in readings of *Religio Medici*. Of all of Browne's writings, however, it is the unpublished *Letter to a Friend* that gives the fullest picture of the Christian physician in action. The letter, only printed posthumously in 1690, is designed to console the addressee (probably another doctor) on the death of the latter's 'intimate friend', whom Browne attended in his final days. Neither of these people are identified in the letter, and I agree with N.J. Endicott in finding F.L. Huntley's identification of the patient with Robert Loveday (1620/21–1656), and the addressee with Sir John Pettus (c. 1613–1685), highly doubtful.<sup>33</sup> Huntley's theory that the letter was composed in 1656 (an attempt to associate the work with *Urne-Buriall*) unsatisfactorily dismisses important internal evidence as later interpolations, which points strongly to a composition date after the Restoration, probably around 1672. This suggests that the theme behind the title of *Religio Medici* was not simply the product of his youth, but manifested itself in Browne's later life too.

The work has a two-part structure. The first part describes the course of Browne's patient's final illness and the results of a post-mortem, praising his memory and offering consolation to the addressee. The second part is a series of directions on living a virtuous life, most of which also form part of a separate text, *Christian Morals*. The shift in tone from the first to the second part is a marked one; indeed, the whole letter seems to be a curious mixture of different discourses, and (as with *Religio Medici*) it would be wrong to impose a single interpretation on the work's purpose and structure. Nonetheless, what might at first appear strange in *A Letter* can be more readily understood by a reader who is aware of the extent to which medical and religious approaches are connected for Browne.

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<sup>33</sup> Endicott N.J., "Browne's 'Letter to a Friend'", Letters to the Editor, *Times Literary Supplement* (15 September 1966) 868. See also Höltgen K.J., "Browne's 'Letter to a Friend,'" Letters to the Editor, *Times Literary Supplement* (20 October 1966) 966, for a correction of Huntley's erroneous claim that a parish register in Chediston records Loveday's death in 1656. For Huntley's argument, see "The Occasion and Date of Sir Thomas Browne's 'A Letter to a Friend'", *Modern Philology* 48 (1951) 157–171; *Sir Thomas Browne: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Ann Arbor: 1962) 184–203. Huntley's identification is accepted by Geoffrey Keynes and L.C. Martin in their editions.

What type of text is *A Letter*? Its medical slant is clear in the frequent use of technical language (for example, the description of the autopsy), the many references to medical sources, and the long discussions about the nature of disease. However, as a medical text it is unconventional. It is certainly not a *consilium*, a genre of medical writing which, although commonly in letter form, is a piece of ‘professional advice written down in response to an individual request for counsel’ about a case, and normally describes a patient’s symptoms, diagnoses the illness, and, most importantly, recommends a cure.<sup>34</sup> The patient who is the subject of Brown’s letter has already died, and all that the writer can offer is consolation. It bears a greater similarity to the tradition of written case-histories such as the *observatio*, which narrates the full progress of a disease, with medical commentary, including the illness’s end in recovery or (occasionally) death.<sup>35</sup> From a general, non-medical perspective, *A Letter* can be seen as part of the long tradition of epistolary consolation originating in classical literature. Perhaps the closest equivalent in Christian writing is the pastoral letter, a text of spiritual guidance and comfort written to an individual by a minister, and a popular form in the seventeenth century (Richard Baxter’s vast correspondence is one outstanding example). Browne’s letter, then, is a hybrid of different textual traditions, which brings a Christian slant to a medical case and contains characteristic features such as digressions on the nature of dreams. Its most persistent authorial voice is, as N.J. Endicott recognized, that of ‘a Christian *doctor*’.<sup>36</sup>

Browne’s attitude to his patient’s death is a clear example of how religious and medical viewpoints meet in this work, while his report of his own conduct in the case bears the hallmarks of the Christian physician figure. As Henry Atherton would later advise, he does not ‘peremptorily promise a Cure in uncertain and dangerous Diseases’,<sup>37</sup> but in his own words ‘was bold to tell them who had not let fall all hopes of his Recovery, That in my sad Opinion he was not like to behold a Grashopper, much less to pluck another Fig’ (1.102). This boldness is

<sup>34</sup> Siraisi N.G., *Taddeo Alderotti and his Pupils: Two Generations of Italian Medical Learning* (Princeton NJ: 1981) 270; for more on *consilia*, see 270–302.

<sup>35</sup> See Nance B., ‘Wondrous Experience as Text: Valleriola and the *Observationes Medicinales*’, in Furdell E.L. (ed.), *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Medicine* (Leiden: 2005) 101–118.

<sup>36</sup> Endicott N.J., ‘Sir Thomas Browne’s *Letter to a Friend*’, *University of Toronto Quarterly* 36 (1966–1967) 68–86 (70); cf. Bennett J., *Sir Thomas Browne: A Man of Achievement in Literature*’ (Cambridge: 1962) 229.

<sup>37</sup> Atherton H., *Christian Physician* 85.

part of the pious physician's duty, writers on the subject claim, since patients should be spiritually prepared for their deaths. Part of Browne's later consolation to his addressee is that the patient did not, unlike many mortally ill people, 'become more narrow minded, miserable and tenacious' (1.110); instead, 'to be dissolved, and be with Christ, was his dying ditty' (1.111). Here he stresses that the man died as a good Christian; many an early modern English funeral sermon places similar emphasis on the narrative of its subject's "good end". However, earlier on in his work he is careful to stress that the death was also a 'soft Departure' and an 'easie' one (1.103), like sleep. Religious works rarely dwell on the positive qualities of such a slipping-away, preferring to highlight those cases when a dying person is conscious and uttering pious words until the final moment. As a doctor treating a dying man, Browne's focus is on the relief of pain, and hence he finds a 'soft Departure' preferable. Likewise, in *Religio Medici*, when he meditates on the similarities between sleep and death, he comments that '*Themistocles* therefore that slew his Souldier in his sleepe was a mercifull executioner' (1.89). His use of the word 'mercifull' here is suggestive of the humane approach of the physician who primarily sees a good death as a painless one (hence the mercy of killing someone who is unconscious), and who is perhaps resistant to the insistent focus on the dying person's behaviour on the deathbed, which is particularly apparent in Calvinist writing of the period. In *A Letter*, on the one hand Browne makes clear that his patient is virtuous and 'content with Death' (1.111), thus standing as a good moral example; on the other, as a doctor he focuses on the moment of death from a medical point of view.

Another aspect of *A Letter* which suggests how religious and medical viewpoints combine in Browne's writing is his reference to miracles. Besides the patient's 'soft Death', he tells his addressee, 'the incurable state of his Disease might somewhat extenuate your Sorrow, who know that Monsters but seldom happen, Miracles more rarely, in Physick' (1.103). His remark here is one strong indication that the letter's recipient is also a medical man.<sup>38</sup> The discussion of miracles would be of particular resonance to a Christian physician, since questions about the status of miracles feature in a number of seventeenth-century works

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<sup>38</sup> Endicott N.J., "Browne's 'Letter to a Friend'" suggests that the recipient should be 'a young man of medical interests' and makes the intriguing (and not implausible) conjecture that it might be Browne's son, Edward.

about religion and medicine.<sup>39</sup> Browne pays attention to the topic both in *A Letter* and in *Religio Medici*. In the latter, he outlines a position which is cautious—‘That Miracles are ceased, I can neither prove, nor absolutely deny’ (1.38)—but not as sceptical as, for example, Jean Calvin (1509–1564), who maintained that the age of miracles was past, and would certainly have rejected altogether (unlike Browne) the reports of ‘the Jesuites and their Miracles in the Indies’ (1.38).<sup>40</sup> In *A Letter*, he notes that there is no specific mention in the gospels of a consumptive person being cured by Jesus, ‘tho some may be contained in that large Expression, That *he went about Galilee healing all manner of Sickness, and all manner of Diseases*’ (1.103). The Bible verse to which Browne here alludes, Matthew 4.23, is used by seventeenth-century writers as the ideal precedent for the Christian physician in the figure of Christ. Robert Burton and Obadiah Walker both cite this passage, Burton in his remarks on the close relation between the professions of divinity and medicine, and Walker on how Christ was ‘a great *Physitian* of Bodies’, and therefore all doctors should be held in reverence.<sup>41</sup>

What is of particular interest in treatments of the gospel miracles are the various reactions of writers to the physical means by which Christ performed them, such as laying hands on a sick person or making clay to put on the eyes of the blind man whose sight he restores (John 9.6–7). Calvin’s commentaries stress that Jesus could have healed without any outward means, and that these actions were spiritually symbolic, not part of any kind of healing ceremony.<sup>42</sup> Henry Atherton reads them very differently, noting that many Biblical miracles include what he calls ‘natural means’. The physical gestures Jesus uses such as the laying-on of hands are linked by Atherton to the actions of physicians, since ‘it is very manifest that God Almighty doth not separate the Means from the End, but makes the former a necessary preparative to the latter’.<sup>43</sup> The Biblical miracles are hence used not to make a theological point about ceremony and sacrament (as in Calvin) but to legitimize the medical profession as, firstly, following Christ’s example, and, secondly, being a conduit of God’s purposes and power. Browne’s approach to

<sup>39</sup> See, e.g., Atherton H., *The Christian Physician* 61–62; H[arris] J., *The Divine Physician* (London: 1676) 137.

<sup>40</sup> On Calvin’s anti-Catholic treatment of miracles, see Wear A., “Religious Beliefs and Medicine” 155–156.

<sup>41</sup> Burton R., *Anatomy* 1.22; Walker O., *Periamma ‘Epidemion* 28.

<sup>42</sup> Wear A., “Religious Beliefs and Medicine” 155.

<sup>43</sup> Atherton H., *Christian Physician* 62.

miracles is closer to Atherton's than Calvin's. One final example, this time from a note in one of Browne's commonplace books, epitomizes the unique way in which he combines medical and religious standpoints. He is commenting on the account in Mark 7.32–37 of how Jesus heals a deaf and dumb man by putting his fingers into the man's ears and touching his tongue. Browne interprets this action as an applying of 'the visible way of cure unto both the suffering parts'. He continues by quoting the gospel version:

*And his eares were opened & the string of his tongue was loosed.* His eares were opened when the obstruction of the auditory nerve was relieved. The string of his tongue, the *vinculum* of his speech, was released when the second branch [of nerves] descending upon the larynx & tongue implicated with the motive nerve of the seventh conjugation was opened & restored to its natural function. (3.260–261)

Browne's professional interest in what was wrong with the man and how he was healed is reflected here in his technical language, but that language should not therefore be read as a sign that he is diminishing the power of the miracle. For Browne the supernatural cure is all the more plausible because the evidence of the scriptural account corresponds to his medical understanding of the case. This, of course, is despite the fact that, as he tells the reader in *Religio Medici*, he can believe in the truth of many Bible stories without raising 'queries fantastick' (1.32) about their factual accuracy. In his discussion of miracles in *Religio Medici* he warns that '[w]ee doe too narrowly define the power of God, restraining it to our capacities' (1.38), but narrow definition is not the same as achieving greater understanding of divinity through medicine.

In *A Letter to a Friend* we see the religious doctor in action, describing in detail his actions and medical opinions about the case he describes, meditating on dying and death, and offering spiritual comfort to his addressee. Just as in his commonplace book he naturally applies a medical perspective to Jesus's healing miracle, so in *A Letter* he applies religious consolation and advice on living well to a doctor's report. In telling his addressee of his friend's final hours, he encourages the reader to do what he advises at the end of the work: that is, to join the present life and the life to come together, 'unite them in thy Thoughts and Actions', since 'He who thus ordereth the Purposes of this Life, will never be far from the next' (1.118). From *Religio Medici* to *A Letter*, Browne's writings emphasize that this uniting of physical and spiritual realms of experience should occur not solely in contemplation ('Thoughts') but

also in practice ('Actions'). For many of his readers, it was in the practice of religion and medicine, as reflected in his writings, that Browne provided a powerful model of the Christian physician.

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ORDER IN THE VORTEX: CHRISTIAN KNORR  
VON ROSENROTH AS COMPILER AND TRANSLATOR  
OF THOMAS BROWNE, JEAN D'ESPAGNET, HENRY MORE,  
GOTTFRIED WILHELM LEIBNIZ AND  
ANTOINE LE GRAND

Eric Achermann  
Trans. Kathryn Murphy and Doris Einsiedel

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In 1680, a thick volume appeared from the publisher Christoff Riegel of Frankfurt and Leipzig, the title of which offered a veritable table of contents:

The *PSEVDODOXIA EPIDEMICA* of the most excellent Englishman *THOMAS BROWNE*; that is, an investigation of those errors/which are accepted by the common man/and elsewhere. In seven books, and so structured/that it begins with errors in general/with the addition of various curious little tracts/such as a handbook of the restored arts of nature/which contains the whole foundation of chymical science; Item a work against common errors regarding the movement of natural things; the same of *D. Henry More* about the immaterial things of the world/against *Cartesius*; And then in the remaining six books errors regarding/minerals/plants/animals/man/images and paintings/the description of the world and history/are further treated. Everything translated with particular attention from the English and Latin with the addition of Latin words of art/into the pure high German language/explicated through special annotations/and various engravings supplied by Christian *Peganus*, called in German Rautner.<sup>1</sup>

As an introduction to the text, this title bore only slight similarity to that of the original: *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: Or, ENQUIRIES into Very many received Tenents, And commonly presumed TRUTHS*.<sup>2</sup> The German work,

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<sup>1</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, trans. C. Knorr von Rosenroth (Frankfurt and Leipzig: 1680).

<sup>2</sup> The title-pages of the first (1646) and the sixth (1672) editions of the *Pseudodoxia* can be found in Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. R. Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford: 1981) 1.lxv; 1.lxvii. References to Browne's original are to this edition throughout.

compiled and translated by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1636–1689) under his usual pseudonyms “Christian Peganius” and “Rautner”,<sup>3</sup> promised various things in addition to a translation from the English of the seven books of Thomas Browne’s *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. A translation of the Latin *Enchiridion Physicae Restitutae* (1623) by Jean d’Espagnet (1564–1637),<sup>4</sup> identified only by the anagram “Spes mea in agno est” [my hope is in the lamb], is followed by a translation of a work “against common errors”: the first part of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s (1646–1716) tract *Hypothesis physica nova* of 1671,<sup>5</sup> and finally by what Knorr calls a “Proof of the Existence of Immaterial Objects”, a series of chapters from Henry More’s (1614–1687) *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* of 1672,<sup>6</sup> one of his major works.<sup>7</sup>

Even this, however, was not enough: it was not only with the tracts signalled on the title-page that Knorr chose to interrupt the admittedly tenuous thread of Browne’s argument in *Pseudodoxia*, between the first book and the second.<sup>8</sup> Into these insertions, Knorr inserted still more.

<sup>3</sup> [Translators’ note] Knorr was a German polymath and pietistic poet, who from 1668 was an adviser at the court of Christian August, Count Palatine of Sulzbach (1632–1708), in northern Bavaria. He is most widely known for his collaboration with Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont (1614–1698) and Henry More on the influential *Kabbala denudata* (Sulzbach: 1677 and Frankfurt am Main: 1684), the first translation of Hebrew cabbala and related materials into Latin. For further biographical material see Scholem G., *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: 1974; repr. New York and London: 1978) 416–419.

<sup>4</sup> [D’Espagnet J.], *Enchiridion physicae restitutae. Tractatus alter inscriptae Arcanum hermeticae philosophiae opus* (Paris: 1623); references throughout to the Geneva edition of 1673. According to Hermann Kopp, the text was first printed in 1608 and went through several editions and translations (*Die Alchemie in älterer und neuerer Zeit*, 2 vols, vol. 2: *Die Alchemie vom letzten Viertel des 18. Jahrhunderts an* (Heidelberg: 1886; repr. Hildesheim: 1971) 345). Kurd Lasswitz however dates the first edition to 1623 (*Geschichte der Atomistik vom Mittelalter bis Newton*, 2 vols, vol. 1: *Erneuerung der Korpuskulartheorie* (Hamburg: 1890; repr. Hildesheim: 1984) 335). Lasswitz supplies a good summary of the *Enchiridion*, emphasizing d’Espagnet’s role in the development of atomism and his connection with Jan Baptista van Helmont (1579–1644), F.M. van Helmont’s father (335–339).

<sup>5</sup> L[ibniz] G.[W.], *Hypothesis physica nova* (1671) in Leibniz, *Die philosophischen Schriften*, ed. C.J. Gerhardt, 7 vols (Berlin: 1880; repr. Hildesheim: 1978) 4.181–240. Knorr translates the first part, the *Theoria motus concreti*, 181–219.

<sup>6</sup> More H., *Enchiridion Metaphysicum, sive, de rebus incorporeis succincta & luculenta Dissertation*, in More H., *Opera omnia*, 2 vols, vol. 1: *Opera philosophica* ed. S. Hulin (London: 1679; repr. Hildesheim: 1966) 131–334. Knorr translates chapters VI–XVII, with the exception of X.

<sup>7</sup> Knorr’s compilation is discussed in Kemp F., “Christian Knorr von Rosenroth. Sein Leben, seine Schriften, Briefe und Übersetzungen” in van Helmont J.B., *Aufgang der Arzney-Kunst*, 2 vols (Sulzbach: 1683; repr. Munich: 1971) 2.xxiv.

<sup>8</sup> For the structure of the first book, and the macrostructure of the whole *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. Eine

After the 238th section of the closely woven, thesis-like development of d'Espagnet's *Enchiridion*, or "handbook", appear three chapters of More's *Mystery of Godliness*.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Knorr delays the last paragraph of this insertion by interpolating an article several pages long from Antoine le Grand's (1626/7–1699) *Historia naturae*.<sup>10</sup> Typographically, it is difficult to distinguish these texts from one another, and their order is concealed still further by misleading running heads. The situation is complicated even more, only a few pages after the resumption of d'Espagnet's *Enchiridion*, by an equally surprising and intricate development. Knorr inserts a succinctly expressed proof, written in the mode of "quod erat demonstrandum", of the Cartesian explanation of movement: the theory of vortices, or "tourbillons". The proof skilfully reduces sections of Descartes' (1596–1650) *Principia* to the shortest possible summary, without naming Descartes himself, which may suggest that Knorr had only indirect acquaintance with his theory, and was using another source which provided an accurate account of the genuine contents of Descartes' thought.

It is important, here, to clear up a misunderstanding in scholarship on Knorr about the nature of his treatment of Browne's text. Where the translation of the *Pseudodoxia* is concerned, Knorr is not primarily interested in a personal reworking of Browne's text, but aims to present as accurate a translation as possible, which nonetheless – though not excessively, and in part necessarily – takes some liberties. Some of Browne's enigmatic expressions, of which there are many in the *Pseudodoxia*, are paraphrased or avoided;<sup>11</sup> through repetition and smaller acts of systematization, the structure of the sections is made more approachable for the reader; whole sections are left out altogether for various reasons – in the case of the final books, superfluity or a lack of time were presumably decisive for the massive cuts. Finally, the Greek and Latin quotations, which Browne had cited in the original, are translated into German. Knorr's readership was different, and he translates accordingly; his book diverges from the elitism and esotericism of the

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ideengeschichtliche Untersuchung mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Begriffs „reason“ (Frankfurt am Main: 1989) 246–269.

<sup>9</sup> More H., *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London: 1660).

<sup>10</sup> Le Grand A., *Historia naturae variis Experimentis & Ratiociniis elucidata* (1673; 2nd ed. Nuremberg: 1680).

<sup>11</sup> Brady P., "Nor let the hard words fright yee" – On the Fearless Translator Christian Knorr von Rosenroth", *German Life and Letters* 47/3 (1994) 233–241, here 237.

English original.<sup>12</sup> Knorr's linguistic skill, evident in his popularizations, is throughout impressive.<sup>13</sup>

Knorr does not just translate, however, but also annotates, in clearly separated sections of notes which are always positioned at the end of a section or chapter. These notes are always set off by the word 'Anmerckung' ("note" or "comment") printed in bold; more rarely pointed brackets or introductory signs are printed in the margins. It cannot be claimed, however, that Knorr greatly extends the content of what Browne offers, or brings out what is most significant and remarkable in Browne. On the contrary, Knorr's annotations are mostly (though not all) linguistically less elegant, expressed in a somewhat pedantic tone and motivated by an interest in the exotic which exceeds even Browne's. The chapter "On the Jews" – in Browne's original, "That the Jewes stincke" – is a case in point. Nothing new about the subject beyond what Browne had already written appears to have occurred to Knorr in the writing of his notes, which are instead devoted to the production of musk. In general, Knorr's notes are based on reading, much more rarely on personal experience or observation. The literary corpus used by Knorr does not much differ from that of the original *Pseudodoxia*, though a preference for Bochart's *Hierozoicon* is detectable.<sup>14</sup>

## 2

In short, neither the method of translation nor the content and extent of Knorr's commentary seems striking or extraordinary. Considerably more weight must be given to the interpolation of a whole array of other translations between the first and second books of Browne's *Pseudodoxia*, which taken together represent more than 40 per cent of the extent of the book. In what follows, we will focus on one question:

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<sup>12</sup> See Brady P., "Christian Knorr von Rosenroth und England. Sir Thomas Brownes *Pseudodoxia eingedeutscht*", *Morgen-glanz* 3 (1993) 137–154, here 146–154.

<sup>13</sup> Although More esteemed Knorr's knowledge of English in a letter of 1 November 1673 to Anne Conway as modest, the translation of the *Pseudodoxia* shows him to have been very competent in the foreign tongue, and of great skill in his own. See M.H. Nicolson – S. Hutton (eds.), *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and their friends 1642–1684* (Oxford: 1992) 374–375.

<sup>14</sup> Bochart S., *Hierozoicon, sive, bipartitem opus De animalibus Sacrae Scripturae* (London: 1663).

what is the function of this remarkably extensive compilation inserted between the first two books of Browne's *Pseudodoxia*?

To form a hypothesis regarding the reasons behind this massive intrusion in Browne's text we begin with the proof of the "tourbillon" theory, since it is initially the most baffling of the insertions. Whether the proof, as it stands here, derives from Knorr himself or from another unnamed compiler, the *demonstratio*, without further comment, introduces a solid piece of genuine Cartesian physics into a hermetic tract, d'Espagnet's *Enchiridion*. Moreover, Knorr's translations of texts by More and Leibniz inserted after the *demonstratio* are central examples of the resistance to a purely mechanistic explanation of nature which consolidated in the 1670s and 1680s. This mechanistic investigation of nature is primarily and explicitly associated with Descartes, and in particular with the *Principia*, from which the "tourbillon" theory comes, the consequences of which were in the eyes of many contemporaries unacceptable for pious Christians.

In order to better understand the choice and order of the texts, we need to cast an eye over the central debates of natural philosophy in which the most familiar of them, those by More and Leibniz, participated. We can understand this debate in the most general sense as a variation of the "Spinoza Problem": whether and to what extent the formula "Deus sive natura" [God, that is to say, nature] is permissible or appropriate.<sup>15</sup> Roughly speaking, the problem takes its prompt from Italian natural philosophy of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In this period, we encounter a wide variety of attempts at a monistic explanation of the relationship between God and nature, sometimes articulated as Neoplatonic panpsychism, sometimes as radicalized Aristotelian empiricism. In many cases, it may be observed that Platonism is used not just to spiritualize nature (casting soul,<sup>16</sup> understood as an

<sup>15</sup> This central axiom of Spinozism was a stumbling-block even before the publication of Baruch Spinoza's (1632–1677) *Ethics* in 1677, and an identifying marker of libertine physics, as represented by Epicureans and the followers of Gassendi. This is suggested by François Garasse (1585–1681), in his representation of his opponents' position in his "hammer of freethinkers": "There is no other divinity or sovereign power in the world at all, but nature, which we must satisfy in all things, without refusing our body or our senses anything that they desire from us in the exercise of their powers and natural faculties [...] [T]he first axiom of this doctrine, is that God is nature, and nature God". See Garasse, F., *La doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps* (Paris: 1623) 675f.

<sup>16</sup> [Translators' note] 'Soul', here, translates *Geist*, a term which appears many times in this essay and is crucial to its argument. *Geist* however covers a range of meanings in English, of which the most relevant here are 'soul', 'spirit', and 'mind'. Which is

animating force, as an immanent principle at work in the material world), but also naturalizes soul, insofar as the *natura naturans* is set in direct relationship with, even made identical to, *natura naturata*.<sup>17</sup> Even when such theologically controversial natural philosophers as Pietro Pomponazzi (1462–1525) or Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576) took the material world as the foundation of knowledge, they nonetheless conceived and expressed the unity of nature and her operating principles through Platonic concepts. This naturalizing Platonism and Platonizing naturalism cancels the separation and incommensurable otherness of the spiritual and sensible worlds, and thereby also challenges the dualism which had been promoted by Averroism as the most resolute intellectualism of the Middle Ages. This turn of natural philosophy away from a central aspect of the heathen Averroist psychology did not however present a real victory for Christian orthodoxy,<sup>18</sup> since the monistic attempts at explanation did not fully resolve the old difficulties, while introducing new problems which were by no means lesser threats. Orthodox contemporaries were haunted by the bogeymen of the material and mortal individual soul, physical determinism, the limitation of human free will, moral indifference, and many others.

Early modern French libertinism, against which Descartes took a stand, was much in debt to this tradition of Italian monism.<sup>19</sup> It should therefore be no wonder that Descartes' dualism, as a weapon against unpopular scepticism and materialism, met at first with broad acceptance even in clerical circles. The price which had to be paid, however, seemed to others to be too high, since spirit or soul was thus banished from the material world into pure transcendence. In particular,

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appropriate in translation is only decidable by context, and thus we have used each of these at various points in this essay. The reader should be aware, however, that they translate a single term in the German original.

<sup>17</sup> For these concepts and their history see Siebeck H., "Über die Entstehung der Termini *natura naturans* und *natura naturata*", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 3 (1890) 370–378; Lucks H.A., "Natura naturans – *natura naturata*", *The New Scholasticism* 9 (1935) 1–24.

<sup>18</sup> A good overview of early modern Averroism and natural philosophical debates in the University of Padua is offered by Nardi B., "La fine dell'Averroismo", in *Saggi sull'aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI* (Florence: 1958) 443–455. Averroism, despite its "heretical" intellectual doctrines of the soul, offered when mixed with Platonism important building blocks for the establishment of a "mystical" theory of cognition. See Nardi B., "La mistica averroistica e Pico della Mirandola" in *Saggi sull'aristotelismo* 127–146.

<sup>19</sup> See Gregory T., "Aristotelismo e libertinismo", *Giornale Critico della Filosofia Italiana* 61 (1982) 153–167.

natural philosophy, the science of the corporeal world, would have to be grounded on a purely mechanical foundation, which had no causal relationship with the *res cogitans*. Cartesian dualism thus opposed those positions which saw the main object of natural philosophical enquiry in the communication between the spheres of mind and body. The adherents of such a position saw the task of metaphysics primarily in expressing the supposedly necessary contiguity ("contiguitas") of nature and mind as a potential for communication between the noumenal and phenomenal spheres, without however making these two spheres – and consequently God and nature – identical. Their aim was to find a way between the Spinozist Scylla and the Cartesian Charybdis.<sup>20</sup> The active principle of soul or spirit is considered as different from nature, but not separate from it: universally present, active in and influencing nature, but not however identical with it.

It is this assumption of a real communication between these two spheres which provides the foundation for the overlap between Platonizing natural philosophy and the various manifestations of hermeticism.<sup>21</sup> Its long tradition actually gained in strength under the pressure of the events described above, rather than shrinking away without a struggle when faced with the new concept of science [*Wissenschaftsbegriff*].<sup>22</sup> At the vanguard of those who protested against both Cartesian dualism and Spinozism were the Cambridge Platonists, who insisted on the

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<sup>20</sup> In what follows attention will be focussed on the presumed threat which orthodoxy felt from Descartes. Spinoza and Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) will remain unmentioned, although Henry More's apologetic zeal was directed at both. For opposition to Spinoza, see More's *Brevis solidaque confutatio* in Jacob A., *Henry More's Refutation of Spinoza* (Hildesheim: 1991), which, alongside the Latin original, contains an English translation and helpful introduction.

<sup>21</sup> For an account of hermeticism which relies primarily on the *communio* between these two spheres, see Rossi P., *La nascita della scienza moderna in Europa* (Rome: 1997) esp. 18–20. It is most baffling however to find such an overlap between hermeticism and the more mediate position of Henry More, who sees a synthesis between Platonic spiritualism and Cartesian materialism in Pythagorean philosophy and Jewish cabbala: 'It is therefore evident to me that the ancient *Pythagorick*, or *Judaick Cabbala* did consist of what we now call *Platonisme* and *Cartesianisme*, the latter being as it were the *Body*, the other the *Soul* of that Philosophy; the unhappy disjunction of which has been a great evil to both: [...] And therefore I do not a little please myself in that I have made some progress towards the resuscitating that *ancient* and *venerable* *Wisdom* again to life, and the bringing together, as it were, of the *Soul* and *Body* of *Moses*, fitly investing him or clothing him with the Covering of his own most sacred Text.' See "The Preface General", in More H., *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* (London: 1662) xviiif.

<sup>22</sup> For a good concise summary of the tradition see Garin E., *Lo zodiaco della vita: La polemica sull'astrologia dal Trecento al Cinquecento* (Rome: 1976) 63–92.

union of metaphysics and physics in natural philosophy.<sup>23</sup> In this connection, it is entirely appropriate to refer with Popkin to a ‘third force in seventeenth-century thought’.<sup>24</sup> Henry More, a central figure of this circle, took an exemplary attitude towards this problem. He had initially greeted Descartes’ philosophy excitedly as a refutation of sceptical and libertine tendencies,<sup>25</sup> but began to express himself increasingly in opposition to Descartes, as he came to find his banishment of spirit into the realm of transcendence, and his purely mechanistic conception of the world of matter, increasingly problematic. At the heart of More’s anti-Cartesian polemic stands the Cartesian division of “*res cogitans*” from “*res extensa*”.

For More, a range of ‘spirits’<sup>26</sup> interposed themselves between God conceived on the one hand as absolute unity and total consciousness, and on the other as final cause of movement in the world of matter. These spirits imitated the divine and strove to furnish the passive and manifold world of matter and bodies with unity. As he maintained in 1659 in the *Immortality of the Soul*, ‘spirit’ was a penetrable, yet indivisible substance, characterized by ‘self-motion’, ‘self-penetration’, ‘self-contraction’, ‘self-dilatation’, and the power to penetrate, move and change

<sup>23</sup> See the excellent account in Kondylis P., *Die Aufklärung im Rahmen des neuzeitlichen Rationalismus* (Munich: 1986) 191–209. On the Cambridge Platonists’ varying opinions of Descartes, see Saveson J.E., “Differing Reactions to Descartes among the Cambridge Platonists”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 21 (1960) 560–567.

<sup>24</sup> The phrase is meant as a criticism of the reduction of seventeenth-century philosophy into “Cartesian rationalism” and “British empiricism”, which together caused the rise of the “new science”, an account widely accepted until the 1980s. See Popkin R.H., *The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Leiden: 1992) 90, on More 111–120, and in a different context 203–211. On More, Knorr and Sulzbach against the background of this “third force” see Zeller R., “Naturmagic, Kabbala, Millennium. Das Sulzbacher Projekt um Christian Knorr von Rosenroth und der Cambridger Platoniker Henry More”, *Morgen-Glanz* 11 (2001) 13–75, esp. 14–18. For the place of Browne in this “scienza ‘alternativa’”, see Rocci G., *Thomas Browne (1605–1682) e il disincanto del mondo* (Rome: 1984) 61–116, esp. 43–57.

<sup>25</sup> On the relationship between More and Descartes see chapters 5 and 6 of Koyré A., *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore, MD: 1957) 110–154 and Hall A.R., *Henry More: Magic, Religion and Experiment* (Oxford: 1990) 108–114 and 146–167.

<sup>26</sup> For the fundamental polyvalence of “spirit” for More see Hall A.R., *Henry More* 128–145. More sets out the different types of “spirits” himself in a separate chapter of *The Immortality of the Soul*, included as the fifth, separately paginated section in More H., *Several Philosophical Writings*, here 34–36. On More’s Plotinian hierarchy of being, which stipulates a range of graded steps in the communication between the absolutely one, God, and the manifold material world, see Jacob A., “Introduction” in *Henry More’s Manual of Metaphysics: A Translation of the Enchiridium Metaphysicum* (1679), 2 vols (Hildesheim: 1995) 2.iv.

other bodies.<sup>27</sup> The incommensurability of the spiritual concepts of substance endorsed by the early More with Cartesian dualism is obvious, since More's conception of "spirit" meant in fact a retention of the "substantiae incorporeae" and substantial forms so abhorrent to Descartes.<sup>28</sup> More had to reach the conclusion, not least in his correspondence with Descartes, that a synthesis of their versions of natural philosophy was not possible.<sup>29</sup> These circumstances, and the increasing spiritualization repeatedly emphasized in More scholarship, with its accompanying elaboration of an increasingly complicated 'immaterial Neoplatonism',<sup>30</sup> explain More's violent reaction to Descartes in his last great work, the *Enchiridion Metaphysicum*. There he appears convinced that Descartes' answer to scepticism and libertinism does not so much erect a bulwark against atheism, as offer it new weapons. Descartes, in bisecting God's reality, in fact stands ready in the service of outright atheism. If, as Descartes holds in the *Principia*, matter and space are coextensive – space exists only where there is matter,<sup>31</sup> and vice versa – then spirit can only "be" in a transferred sense, relative to its ontological definition. More discusses the blasphemous Cartesian opinion that space, spirit and God are objects only to the 'imagination'.<sup>32</sup> If however neither God nor spirit exists in space, they cannot operate in space or have an effect in it, neither changing bodies nor moving them. If Descartes was right, and the plenitude of matter in

<sup>27</sup> More H., *Immortality of the Soul* 21f., 31–33.

<sup>28</sup> See for example Descartes R., *Principia philosophiae* (Amsterdam: 1644) II.9, 38, which begins 'Corporal substance, when distinguished from its quantity, is confusedly conceived as something incorporeal'. (Descartes R., *A Discourse on Method, Meditations and Principles* trans. J. Veitch (London: 1995) 186.) On Descartes's denial of substantial forms see Gilson E., "La critique cartésienne des formes substantielles" (1929) in *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien* (Paris: 1930) 143–168.

<sup>29</sup> See here the account given in Ward R., *The Life of the Learned and Pious Dr. Henry More* (London: 1710) in *The Life of Henry More Parts 1 and 2*, ed. S. Hutton et al. (Dordrecht: 2000) 337–339.

<sup>30</sup> Jacob A., "Introduction", *More's Manual* 2.iv.

<sup>31</sup> Descartes's idea of bodies is exemplarily condensed in Duhem P., *Ziel und Struktur der physikalischen Theorie* (1906), trans. F. Adler, (Leipzig: 1908) 12: 'According to Descartes, matter is identical with extension as considered by geometers with regard to length, breadth and depth. One cannot discuss anything other than the variety of shapes and motions. Cartesian matter is, if one may so express it, a kind of massive fluid, incompressible and absolutely homogenous. Hard and indivisible atoms, and the empty space which separates them, are just appearances and illusions. Certain parts of this general fluid can be animated by lasting vortical movements: these vortices are seen by the crude eyes of the atomists as indivisible elements.'

<sup>32</sup> See More H., *Enchiridion Metaphysicum* I.viii.8, 167.

space constituted space, and consequently an immaterial vacuum could not exist, then spirit (or spiritual beings) could not exist in actuality, but would be merely a transcendent mental concept. If someone wishes to bring God into the world – and this is More's explicit intention – space must first be created for Him.

More's attempt to reinterpret the idea of a vacuum, derived from Robert Boyle's experiments with the air-pump, must be considered against this background. His argument against Boyle can be briefly summarized: the air-pump did not produce a vacuum in an absolute sense, but an absence of bodies, which indicated the necessity of conceiving space independently of matter. This space would however be filled with 'Divine Matter', a 'Spirit of Nature': an extended (it fills the space, after all) but nonetheless immaterial mass.<sup>33</sup> There are powers in the vacuum, according to More, which through their extension fill the vacuum immaterially: powers both exist and have effects in space, and manifest themselves in actual, not merely relative, movement.

Thus Knorr integrates into his translation of Browne – more accurately, into his translation of d'Espagnet – both a concise exposition of central statements of Cartesian cosmology and doctrine on movement and also, more extensively, central passages from More's critique of the Cartesian theses on the coextensivity of space and matter. The "note" which contains 'the proof of the motion of the earth by a certain mathematical investigator of nature [sc. Descartes]' begins after the 242nd thesis of d'Espagnet's *Enchiridion*. Its insertion just three theses before the end of the whole handbook is not coincidental. In thesis 242 d'Espagnet states that 'the earth belongs among the stars [sc. the earth is a star]', and that there is no significant difference between the earth and the moon: both are fixed bodies, both reflect the light of the sun, both emit virtues and spirits. Thus d'Espagnet suggests that it is possible, in fact entirely probable, that the moon is inhabited, since the whole cosmos could scarcely be designed solely for the purpose of securing the good of the earth. God had created the earth because he could not bear his own loneliness, and had thus externalized himself in his creatures; how much more wonderful and appropriate to his glory would be a cosmos fully inhabited by creatures of various kinds? Thesis

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<sup>33</sup> For the development of this argument in More's thought see Greene R.A., "Henry More and Boyle on the Spirit of Nature", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 (1962) 451–474, in particular 465f. On More's disagreement with Boyle, see Hall A.R., *Henry More* 183–194.

243, which comes after Descartes' proof, discusses by contrast the sun, which hangs, according to d'Espagnet, like a lamp in the middle of a royal palace. From here the ruler's light, spirit and life is distributed to all creatures.<sup>34</sup> The assumption that God, though so far removed from matter, rules and directs his works through a material instrument and medium thus seems reasonable. Light is, according to d'Espagnet, of extraordinary quality, filled with the spirit of life, and the sun is the monarch of the sensible world, ruling over the sensible creatures. This, concludes d'Espagnet's tract, is the hidden wisdom which man lost at the Fall, since man is in fact made in God's image and has, like Him, although to a lesser degree, the powers of intellect and will.

If we want to situate Descartes' vortex theory in this context, we must consider it as a 'note' on the manifold nature of the world, as expressed in thesis 242, and as a link to the communication of light (thesis 243). Here, Cartesian physics and cosmology appear, literally, in a new light: the Cartesian text, placed immediately after thesis 242, supports an argument for the plurality of worlds. If one accepts the theory of cosmic vortices, one easily accedes to the idea of innumerable, nevertheless mutually influential [*ineinanderwirkender*] worlds, and ultimately also supports an argument for the communicative mechanism of the flow of light, which fills the world with vortices. The proof ends appropriately with the central position of the sun, which suits the hymnic tone of d'Espagnet's 243rd thesis.

We can therefore suggest that Knorr, in inserting the Cartesian text into the complete translation of d'Espagnet's handbook, wanted to strengthen it with a new and "harder" physical theory at a crucial point. Descartes serves here to make the emanation of divine light and the spiritual plenitude of the cosmos plausible on mechanistic grounds. The fact that Knorr accepts without commentary and presents as his own opinion Descartes' much debated definition of fixed bodies as structures whose parts are resting beside one another, as well as the thesis that there can be no space without matter, is a crux. The first of these positions openly contradicts the treatises by More and Leibniz included later in the book, since both stipulate an immaterial means of cohesion in the composition of fixed bodies, while the second thesis, as we have shown, represents More's major objection to Descartes.

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<sup>34</sup> [D'Espagnet J.], *Enchiridion* thesis 243, 177; Browne T., *Pseudodoxa* trans. Knorr, 199f.

One solution would be to see Knorr as a defender of a materialistic Neoplatonism, who attributes material qualities to spirit, light and power. This would agree with certain passages in d'Espagnet, and with Browne in *Pseudodoxia*.<sup>35</sup> A second solution would be to understand Descartes' incriminating statement that '[i]n nature, nothing is empty, rather everything is full of matter' not in the Cartesian sense of matter as an "*extensio corporis*", but rather according to More: matter is, in the Aristotelian sense, not physical "per se", but something which can receive a form, or something potential which is as yet unspecified. Both formulations are not only assimilable without contradiction to More's concept of "divine matter", but in fact necessary to it. If we follow this trail, then the sentence from the Cartesian proof which states that 'a hard and fixed body, surrounded by fluid matter, swims along in and with the flowing essence' does not mean that 'fluid matter' or 'flowing essence' represent something physical. Both Descartes and d'Espagnet make a clear distinction between "fluid" (*fluidus*), a characteristic of motion, and "moist" (*humidus*), which describes either one of the four elements or a characteristic of bodies. It is in this sense that the locution 'fluid' or 'flowing' light ("tanquam riulos à purissimis suis fontibus scaturientes": like streams gushing from their most pure sources) is to be understood, a description which d'Espagnet uses frequently, and which finds its origin in the Plotinian concept of emanation. If we read the crucial sentence with More, then the fixed body 'swims' in matter which is composed at once of bodies and corpuscles and of the "subtilissima" of an intangible but nevertheless extended substance. Under these different auspices, the statement that there is no such thing as empty space is true *salva veritate*. This holds even in spite of the fact that Descartes' intentions are here directed at a thesis utterly abhorrent to More. Where More posits empty space, against Descartes, in order to admit the existence of God, he always means a space free of bodies, which makes it possible, indeed necessary, to think of space which is filled with "spirits", and thus from the metaphysical standpoint no longer empty.

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<sup>35</sup> It is obvious in various places in *Pseudodoxia* that Browne considers light at once as "spirit" and as a physical material (Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.138f., 1.151, 1.435), esp. in his treatment of magnetic and electrical phenomena. In chapters 2–4 of the second book, the most important in considering Browne's natural philosophical position, he mostly follows Gilbert, but also uses Descartes. On his sources see Robbins's commentary: Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* 2.725–751.

The ambiguity of this bivalent notion of matter results necessarily from the concept of extended immaterial substances. This repeats the aforementioned crux – that Knorr interpolates Descartes' “tourbillon” theory, including the thesis that there can be no space without matter, seemingly in direct contradiction to More and Leibniz. The theoretical determination of this crux serves the negotiation between spiritual and material aspects of natural philosophy, or – as More would have it – the negotiation between metaphysics and physics. The coexistence of mind and body in a space which belongs to both prompts More to speak of a ‘fourth dimension’, which he attempts to define as ‘density of essence’ (*‘spissitudo essentialis’* [*Wesensdichte*]). According to More, just as a flattened strip of wax decreases in length (first dimension) but increases in width (second dimension) and depth (third dimension) when rolled into a ball, spirit which decreases in extent with respect to three spatial dimensions gains in ‘*spissitudo essentialis*’ (the fourth dimension). Filling up space with a dense body, causing a diminution in the extension of spirits, leads to an increase of their ‘*spissitudo essentialis*’. This fourth dimension, which More introduces at the very end of *Enchiridium metaphysicum*, makes the coexistence of mind and body possible ‘without great contradiction’.<sup>36</sup>

The natural philosophical model we encounter in the first part of this “in-between book” of Knorr’s Browne translation – extracts from d’Espagnet’s *Enchiridion* – can be summarized as follows. Subtle matter, according to d’Espagnet, arises from the principle of light and is equated, or at least closely associated, with spiritual nature. The principle of light is opposed to the principle of shadow, which determines bodies. The first principle is responsible for movement, heat and life. It is the procreative and therefore masculine principle. Bodies, on the contrary, are primarily associated with the attributes of darkness and corruptibility.<sup>37</sup>

We can therefore see that that the spiritual force hidden behind the Plotinian – or at least Plotinizing – emanation of light constitutes a motive, formative and procreative power. This is supported by the wider context, which aligns this principle with the dominant “*natura naturans*” – or the ‘nature-making’ nature, as Knorr calls it.<sup>38</sup> The

<sup>36</sup> More H., *Enchiridion metaphysicum* 320: ‘nullam majorem repugnantiam involvit’.

<sup>37</sup> [D’Espagnet J.], *Enchiridion* 16f.; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 83.

<sup>38</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 75.

divine need for communication leads to a reflection of God and thus to the creation of a vortex (“gyrum volvente”, “cycle”) of light and heat.<sup>39</sup> These are communicated initially into the shadows and clouds closest to the light source and thus create a first world, the first result of God’s reflection.<sup>40</sup> God thus first creates the sun, fire and heat, and these subsequently overcome the enormous gulf between the ontological grandeur of God, and corporeal, formless matter. Through light and heat, God’s influence is universal. The differences in the formation of bodies can be explained through the two attributes which are inimical to light: the individualizing weight and density. The homogeneity of this creative origin leads d’Espagnet to assert in section 237 that nature is not divided into conceptual categories, but exists in unity, because God does not operate through the clash of opposing forces, but through unifying love.<sup>41</sup> Section 238 rejects the idea that the first mover exercises influence on heaven from a sphere beyond the heavens or ‘*Hyperuranion*’.<sup>42</sup> To d’Espagnet, such a construction seems unnecessary, because the motive force works on the world through the sun, and thus originates from within the solar system. Section 239 clarifies this: the lowest region – the corporeal world – is subordinate to an ethereal ‘*prouincia media*’ (middle realm), which occupies the role of ‘*vicarium*’ or substitute for the ‘*suprema & supercoelesti jura*’ (the supreme laws of the realm beyond the heavens).<sup>43</sup>

It is between these two sections that Knorr interrupts d’Espagnet for the first time, with three chapters from More’s *Mystery of Godliness*. Knorr

<sup>39</sup> The idea that cosmological movement can be described as a vortex goes back to Leucippus and Democritus; see Aiston E.J., *The Vortex Theory of Planetary Motion* (London: 1972) 34 and 58.

<sup>40</sup> D’Espagnet expounds the connection between the metaphysics of light and love and the vortex theory in thesis 26 (*Enchiridion* 176; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 83f.). Because solitude goes against his nature, God emerges in love. He communicates himself to himself, which leads to a reflection of light, which is thus poured out into the cosmos and forms new centres, around which, in turn, the “divine matter” rotates. The idea that reflection forms new – inferior – worlds probably goes back to Avicenna and his interpretation of Plotinus. For a good brief account of Avicenna’s cosmology see Verbeke G., “Einleitung zu *Liber de philosophia prima sive scientia divina* (*Kitab al-Shifa*) V–X”, in Avicenna, *Liber tertius naturalium De generatione et corruptione: Avicenna Latinus*, ed. S. van Riet (Leiden: 1977) 51–68. See also Davidson H.A., *Alfarabi, Avicenna and Avicenna on Intellect* (Oxford: 1992) 74–83. Regarding the importance of light to Plotinus see Beierwaltes W., “Plotins Metaphysik des Lichtes” in *Die Philosophie des Neuplatonismus*, ed. C. Zitzen (Darmstadt: 1977) 75–117, esp. 86–92.

<sup>41</sup> [D’Espagnet J.], *Enchiridion* 171f; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 161.

<sup>42</sup> [D’Espagnet J.], *Enchiridion* 172; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 162.

<sup>43</sup> [D’Espagnet J.], *Enchiridion* 173; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 196f.

apparently felt the need to free the natural philosophical cadences of this passage from the suspicion of materialist determinism. In order to do so, Knorr selected a virtually classical *topos*: the condemnation of astrology. 'Now appears to be the time/to call to mind a very harmful and shameful error', the introduction to this section states:

[an error] common among old and young/namely, that one admires the art of the observation of the stars and the casting of nativities/and wants to submit himself to them/not just to prognosticate or prophesy all kinds of things in common calendars and almanacs/but also to learn in advance/of future events/both of whole countries/and of individual people/and even of religion itself and Christ our Lord/as Cardanus did/thereby involving religion and Christ in these things/and thus denigrating them.<sup>44</sup>

Thus Knorr introduces More's condemnation of astrology at the end of the seventh book of the *Mystery of Godliness* with reference to the scandalous horoscope which Cardano, an exemplary heretic among the astrologers, cast for Christ himself.<sup>45</sup> Thus Knorr inserts a text which More himself labelled a 'short Digression'. In addition to the conventional dismissal of the denial of human liberty, a practical consequence of astrology (chapter 17), More is also concerned to refute the view of those who hold that the planets have direct influence (chapter 15):

[...] say they, it is plain that the Heavenly bodies have not only a power or influence, besides *Light*, but more searching and penetrating then *Light* it self, as being able to make its way through the thickness of the Earth, and to reach its effect on the further side thereof.<sup>46</sup>

In contradiction, More supplies five points which support d'Espagnet's account of light:

[...] the *Starrs* are but Lights of much the same nature as our *Sun* is, only they are further removed [...] And again, Nothing turns off their more subtil Influence, according to their own concession; and therefore though there were this *Variety* in them, yet because all this *Variety* reaches every point of the Earth, the Product would be the same, unless the particles

<sup>44</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 162.

<sup>45</sup> On Cardano's horoscope for Christ, see Fierz M., *Girolamo Cardano (1501–1576): Arzt, Naturphilosoph, Mathematiker, Astronom und Traumdeuter* (Basel: 1977) 286; Ernst G., "Veritas amor dulcissimus". Aspetti dell'astrologia in Cardano", in *Girolamo Cardano: Philosoph Naturforscher Arzt*, ed. E. Kessler (Wiesbaden: 1994) 157–184, here 158. More condemns Cardano's horoscope (*Explanation* 360). Knorr omits this section, replacing it with a chapter from Le Grand's *Historia*.

<sup>46</sup> More H., *Explanation* 339.

of the Earth were diversified by some other cause, which assuredly they are. And thirdly, That neither their own *Variety*, nor the *influences* of the Heavens, if they be merely *material*, are sufficient causes of Productions here below. Fourthly, That the *celestial Matter* is every where, and that the Earth swims in it, as Wood does in Water, so that we need not have recourse to so remote unknown activities. And lastly, That that general  $\lambda\delta\gamma\sigma$   $\sigma\pi\epsilon\rho\mu\alpha\tau\eta\varsigma$ , or *Spirit of Nature*, is also every where ready to contrive the *Matter* into such shapes and virtues as its disposition makes toward.<sup>47</sup>

Knorr's selection of these chapters from More's *Mystery of Godliness* is thus strategic. Not only does the authority of this other 'most excellent Englishman' support the theoretical account of the emanation of light in agreement with both Plotinus and d'Espagnet;<sup>48</sup> it also asserts that, in contrast with the suspect hocus-pocus of astrology, their hermeticism is reasonable, and tenable for the orthodox, morally-minded man. A cosmology of flowing light does not pose a threat to free will. A similar strategy motivates Knorr's insertion of Antoine Le Grand's article "De praedictionibus astrologicis" from his *Historia naturae*.<sup>49</sup> Although this passage does not contribute anything substantial, especially not for our concerns, to More's arguments against astrology;<sup>50</sup> it does authoritatively support the verdict of judgement based on reason and natural theology. Le Grand, who served in England as a Franciscan provincial superior, was a follower of Descartes and – at the latest after the dispute about the soul of animals<sup>51</sup> – a pronounced opponent of the Cambridge Platonists; he cannot, therefore, be suspected of partiality.<sup>52</sup>

The order in which the texts appear – d'Espagnet (theses 1–237)/More and Le Grand (the three chapters from *Mystery of Godliness* and the article from the *Historia*)/d'Espagnet (sections 238–242)/Descartes (the proof of the vortex theory)/d'Espagnet (sections 243–245) – should thus be read against the background of the Plotinian theory of the

<sup>47</sup> More H., *Explanation* 344.

<sup>48</sup> Regarding Plotinus's condemnation of astrology, see especially the *Enneads* III.1.5–10; a short account by de Gandillac M., *Plotin* (Paris: 1999) 27.

<sup>49</sup> Le Grand A., *Historia naturae* 150–154.

<sup>50</sup> Le Grand refutes astrologers with a "commonsense" argument: if they can predict the future, why are they so poor (*Historia naturae* 150); if they sometimes successfully predict a death, then the person in question has died of anxiety (151), etc.

<sup>51</sup> See Le Grand A., *Historia naturae* 382f. Le Grand also devoted a whole treatise to this topic: *Dissertatio de carentia sensus et cogitationis in brutis* (London: 1675).

<sup>52</sup> On Le Grand, see Pacchi A., "Antoine Le Grand", in *Ueberwegs Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie. Vol. III: England*, ed. J.P. Schobinger (Basel: 1988) 298–301.

emanation of light, which d'Espagnet advocates, depicted as the progress from the universal and divine to the particular and worldly. The striking accumulation of longer interpolations of other texts towards the end of the "little book" is particularly related to the problems resulting from attempts at theoretical justification of the possibility of communication between mind or spirit and body. Here, at the frontier of these realms, everything is at stake: the theory's explanatory power as well as its orthodoxy. Knorr makes an obvious effort to give precedence to an explanation both widely supported and accommodating the most modern theories, founded on an ecumenical and eirenic natural theology derived from universal human reason which nevertheless does not contradict the articles of faith delivered by revelation. Far from contradicting them, this explanation sheds light on the beliefs enjoined by revelation as undisputed truths, and applies an enhanced understanding to them. Among these basic truths, taught by both reason and religion, Knorr includes the immanence of spirit and thus the divine presence in nature. The extent to which Knorr supports this thesis, along the lines laid out by More, is clear from his insistent translation of d'Espagnet's ninth section, and his subsequent remarks:

The 9th section

On the movement of the world. The world is a clock/or a similar device/ which is continually moved around in the circle: its parts are/like the links of a chain/of which each is always connected to another. Nature, however,/as the steward or substitute (of the great spirit of God/that is to say that created spirit/which is the first mover of the subtle matter;) exists everywhere in the midst (of the matter)/and governs all changes/as the omnipresent master-worker/who/like a craftsman/everywhere fixes things/whenever something breaks or gets worn out.

Note

Out of this spirit of nature, all effects arise/meaning that understanding can in no way be ascribed to matter; just as/children in their mother's womb/through the imagination of the mother/undergo major changes/ lose their heads and hands/become other things/according to the woman's desires; or receive stains or marks/which later / [...] turn into something else: just as/when vines are in bloom/wine turns/even in places where no vines grow near or far: just as one can heal wounds from afar/and similar matters of sympathy.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> D'Espagnet, *Enchiridion* 6; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* trans. Knorr, 77. D'Espagnet's Latin reads simply: 'MVNDUS est quasi opus febrile in orbem giratum: partes ejus quasi cathenae annuli se mutuis amplexibus stringentes: Natura tanquam,

This passage by d'Espagnet is followed by the first part of Leibniz's *Hypothesis physica nova*, entitled by Leibniz *Theoria motus concreti, seu Hypothesis de rationibus phaenomenorum nostri Orbis*. Knorr translates the entirety of this passage under the title *A tract against common errors/Regarding the movement of natural things*. Knorr's title makes of the *Theoria* another example of a work in the common errors tradition,<sup>54</sup> aligning it with the "Pseudodoxia", "vulgar errors" or "plurimi errores" of Browne and d'Espagnet. The exposure of mistaken opinions can of course serve both a polemical and an apologetic function. Knorr however – like Leibniz – is more interested the capacity to convince the majority, which should belong to a reformed philosophy of nature. Knorr makes the transition from d'Espagnet to Leibniz in only a few lines:

Even though the old errors were handled accurately and thoroughly enough in the last little book [*sc.* d'Espagnet's *Enchiridion*]: today natural philosophers have reached so high/that more subtle teachings on natural things cannot very well be conceived; so we wish to include this very high/new and most subtle little book for the ingenious virtuosi [*sinnreiche Liebhaber*]/so that each will be able to find something to his taste in our work [...]

If Knorr here still speaks of the 'ingenious virtuosi' who must be satisfied, Leibniz expressed the eirenic will to non-partisanship much more firmly at the end of his "conclusio". Leibniz allows both for the usual task of the literature of common errors mentioned in Knorr's introduction, and for the modernity and perfectibility which was also in demand:

I believe/that this opinion/compares and reconciles a number of the opinions of others; where they have shortcomings/it replaces them; where they break off/it goes further; where they are obscure/and expressed enigmatically/it explains them and makes them comprehensible: so that it no longer seems necessary/to look for a new general doctrine/but simply to see/how these opinions which we already have/can be applied [...] / to natural occurrences; how the industry and efforts/of scholars on the one hand; craftsmen on the other/who even now sometimes agree/might be properly explored/and the vaults of honest and fruitful philosophy

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vicaria in medio sita, rerum vices exercens Opifex vbique praesens quasi faber attritus continuò reparans.' On the influence of the mother's imagination on the formation of the child, see the essay by S. Collins and L. Denmead in this volume.

<sup>54</sup> On the models which Browne explicitly mentions, and Bacon's *Advancement*, see Hack-Molitor G., *On Tiptoe in Heaven: Mystik und Reform im Werk von Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682)* (Heidelberg: 2001) 112f.

might be filled/and finally/how their inventions could be applied to useful ends in this life/and to the increase of the power and happiness of humanity/which is the only purpose of philosophy. If this cannot be achieved/it will hopefully be acknowledged/that I have at least endeavoured/to outline such a thing/in this little book./

The link made by Knorr between Leibniz's treatise and the preceding texts could not be closer. In direct reference to the issue which exercised the anti-Cartesians in their attack on the physics of the *Principia*, Leibniz postulates the existence of space free of corporeal matter.<sup>55</sup>

First it must be posited/that both the orb of the sun/and the orb of the earth/exist/and that the space between the two is rather full/of a certain kind of matter/ [...] /and which we will call celestial matter [ether]. (I say/rather full/or as full as this space allows: since our account of the condition of the cosmos is such/that this space could not be filled completely/as we have shown elsewhere.)<sup>56</sup>

Leibniz too conceives the movement of the cosmos as originating in the sun and devotes his attention first of all to the radiation, or emanation, of its light. This light bequeaths form to the world, whose matter, according to the Bible, was initially homogeneous and aqueous.<sup>57</sup> Celestial matter, like 'the same Spirit of the Lord/which moved over the waters' would have, in the beginning, 'permeated everything internally'. This leads to the assertion of an

internal movement of parts, a density and close linking (since two contiguous parts of a body can only be connected/if they press against each other; or, when the body is moved so/that one part pushes the other away/and wants to take its place).<sup>58</sup>

Leibniz calls these compact parts 'globula', which Knorr accurately translates as 'bubbles' [*Blasen*]; they are the basic bodies or corpuscles out of which all things are made – the "semina rerum" or "seeds of

<sup>55</sup> In a letter to Fabri of ?1671, Leibniz remarks that he feels he has not yet sufficiently understood Descartes. Even if his intense study of Descartes, in particular the foundation of his mathematics, was yet to follow, Leibniz is at this point clearly nevertheless familiar with the central aspects of the Cartesian theory of bodies. See Leibniz G.W., *Die philosophischen Schriften* 4.247.

<sup>56</sup> This corresponds to Leibniz's *Hypothesis physica nova* 4.181; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 201.

<sup>57</sup> Leibniz G.W., *Hypothesis physica nova* 4.182f. Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 203f.

<sup>58</sup> Leibniz G.W., *Hypothesis physica nova* 4.184; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 205f. Leibniz's portrayal has similarities to Lucretius's *De rerum natura* (2.444–477).

things".<sup>59</sup> Thus a close connection is established between the underlying assumptions of an early stage in Leibniz's theory of the formation of aggregates, and the explanation of a theory of movement which in turn serves to explain the communication of light as the spiritual principle organizing corporeal matter. Leibniz makes the connection of these theories clear in his "conclusio".<sup>60</sup>

### Conclusion

[...] I propose/that the orb of the earth turns around its own axis/or oscillates around its central pole; and that, in our great cycle, it is the sun alone which has a direct influence beyond itself; the others in turn have none/except insofar as they reflect the light of the sun. Drawing on these initial movements I conclude/that the world is structured according to Copernicus's opinion/and that celestial matter/as well as light, moves in the earth and around the earth in circles. Thus I explain the motion of the sea and the winds; the attraction of magnets to the north; and finally the opposing forces of weight and outward force/out of which all artefacts, of nature/as well as of art, arise [...]

Otherwise however from the linear motion/which originates from the sun/and the deflected motion/produced by the earth/arise the oscillations of certain things of our planet/around a separate centre; or certain bubbles/sometimes also rings/little tubes/and other vessels/which belong to one thing or another/ from which the stability of things/and the variety of kinds result. These vessels/and their diverse contents/cause the different degree of weight in things/when the circular movement of the celestial matter is brought to bear on them: And from this come all phenomena concerning weight; such as the spirit level and the balance. [This is at work] when the bubbles burst/and through the circular motion of the celestial matter/lose themselves in other entities: [...] thus comes into being/the outward force of the celestial matter/ [...] and [...] violent motion/collisions/rebounding/splitting/rapid movements back and forth/ dissolutions/destinations/annual cycles/chymical causes/natural sympathies and antipathies/attractions/ [...] / the force of fire/of gunpowder/of poison/of the philosophical tincture/ [...] /and thus come about all effects greater than the magnitude of the cause/could achieve alone; everything indeed/which our esoteric natural learning calls natural wonders.<sup>61</sup>

We need to bear this cosmology and theory of movement and of bodies in mind when discussing the debt of Leibniz's monadology to Knorr's

<sup>59</sup> Leibniz G.W., *Hypothesis physica nova* 4.184; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 206.

<sup>60</sup> Hans Stammel provides an excellent account of the *Theoria motus concreti* in *Der Kraftbegriff in Leibniz' Physik* (Mannheim: 1982) 91–98.

<sup>61</sup> Leibniz G.W., *Hypothesis physica nova* 4.218f.; Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* trans. Knorr, 249–251.

*Kabbala denudata*.<sup>62</sup> It is not that Leibniz adopted Knorr's insights; rather it was Knorr who recognized in Leibniz a natural philosopher who had 'reached so high/that more subtle teachings on natural things in themselves cannot very well be conceived'. Leibniz's imagination gives expression to a mode of thought determined both by syncretism and by the will to systematize. This is further underlined by the fact that as late as 1692, even though Leibniz firmly rejects the Cartesian classification of bodies in his *Animadversiones in partem generalem Principiorum Cartesianorum*, he nonetheless explicitly excludes the vortex theory from his criticism of Descartes.<sup>63</sup>

With such far-reaching heretical interests it is striking that Knorr only translates and publishes the first part of the *Hypothesis*, even though the second part, the *Theoria motus abstracti*, outlines the concept of the "mens momentanea": that 'each and every body constitutes a momentary mind [*mens momentanea*], [...] lacking memory, lacking any sense of activity and passivity, lacking thought',<sup>64</sup> a concept of singular importance for Leibniz's monadology. We can again do no more than speculate on Knorr's reasons for the omission. It is obvious that Knorr devotes his attention to the ways in which concrete things and the objects of sensory experience work together in respect to natural philosophy. The abstract doctrine of movement, which forms the bulk of the second part of Leibniz's *Hypothesis*, seems less apt to fit into the natural philosophical context of Knorr's compilation. Instead of the second part of Leibniz's treatise, Knorr translated roughly 200 pages of More's critique of Descartes' account of bodies, tracing the proof of the existence of non-corporeal objects from the fourth section of

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<sup>62</sup> Allison P. Coudert holds that for Leibniz's monadology 'no source was as direct and influential as the Kabbalah' (Coudert A.P., "Leibniz, Knorr von Rosenroth, and the *Kabbalah Denudata*" in Dutz K.D. – Gensini S. (eds.), *Im Spiegel des Verstandes. Studien zu Leibniz* (Münster: 1996) 9–28). However the seven elements of Knorr's thought upon which, according to Coudert, Leibniz relied, were widely available Neoplatonic tropes which Leibniz could have read in a number of other sources.

<sup>63</sup> Leibniz G.W., *Animadversiones in partem generalem Principiorum Cartesianorum* in *Die philosophischen Schriften* 4.367–370. On Leibniz's vortex theory, see Aiton E.J., *Vortex Theory* 125–151.

<sup>64</sup> Leibniz G.W., *Theoria motus abstracti*, second part of *Hypothesis physica nova* 4.230: "Omne enim corpus est mens momentanea, [...] caret memoria, caret sensu actionum passionumque suarum, caret cogitatione." On *Theoria motus abstracti* see Stammel H., *Der Kraftbegriff* 83–90; Violette R., "Rôle, portée et structure de la 'Théorie du Mouvement abstrait' dans la philosophie de Leibniz avant son séjour en France" in Heinekamp A. (ed.), *Leibniz' Dynamica* (Wiesbaden: 1984) 103–111, here 106f.

More's preface through to the 26th chapter.<sup>65</sup> The first six chapters, dealing with formal questions of metaphysics and logic in a scholastic and abstract manner, are not translated at all; nor are the expositions at the close which return to more general questions including the proof that non-corporeal things are no harder, if not easier, to understand than corporeal things.<sup>66</sup>

## 3

What conclusions can we draw from the insertion of all of these texts between the first and second books of Browne's *Pseudodoxia*? Browne's first book, unadorned by any of Knorr's 'notes', can be understood as a theory of error, a theory of negative epistemology. Error afflicts humanity through human nature and the machinations of the Devil, from the time of Adam and Eve to the present day. Browne subsequently analyses the human disposition for error in detail and attributes it to various grounds. Books II to VII discuss the specific errors which have manifested themselves regarding minerals and plants, human beings, images, geography and history, and finally revelation.<sup>67</sup> After the "discours du déraisonnement" of the first book, Browne omits philosophical principles in favour of an account of historical errors. *Pseudodoxia* thus appears to be practically a parody of the Cartesian project. Since the *Discours*, Descartes's central insight had been that epistemological certainty results necessarily from the existence and perfection of God.<sup>68</sup> Browne in contrast places emphasis on human nature as subject and susceptible to a "Deus fallax" [false God], namely the devil. Accordingly, the vulgar errors are not under the sign of a perfect God (the "optimus Deus") but rather of the "genius

<sup>65</sup> More provides the reader with twenty proofs. Knorr – for whatever reason – omits only the proofs which derive from a consideration of time, which constitute the tenth chapter.

<sup>66</sup> For a detailed account of the content, tradition and reception of the *Enchiridium metaphysicum*, see the introductions by Jacob to his translation: *Manual of Metaphysics* 1.i.-xvi, 2.i.-xlix.

<sup>67</sup> For a detailed account of the structure of *Pseudodoxia*, see Kühn T., *Browne's Religio Medici und Pseudodoxia Epidemica* 246–269.

<sup>68</sup> Descartes R., *Discours de la méthode* (1637) in *Oeuvres philosophiques* ed. F. Alquié, 3 vols (Paris: 1963) 1.610. See also *Meditationes de prima philosophia* (1641) in *Oeuvres philosophiques* 2.206–214; and *Principia philosophiae* 11f.

*malignus*” – malignant demon – of the *Meditatio prima*.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the movement of Descartes’ *Principia* runs in the opposite direction to that of Browne’s *Pseudodoxia*. Browne pursues errors by climbing the scale of creatures, from metals to plants to animals to human beings. After this he deals first with images – that is, imitations of sensible bodies – then with history and geography, where questions of the origin of the world, astrology, and the movement of the sun, etc., are addressed, and finally with revelation. In contrast, Descartes begins his *Principia* with metaphysics and the question of epistemological certainty, only then treating physics, in the third place astronomy, and finally investigation of the earth.<sup>70</sup> While, generically, Descartes’s *Principia* corresponds to the type of the philosophical handbook, *Pseudodoxia* is indebted to the polymathic tradition.

Knorr’s translation links the two modes of presentation: the systematic and the accumulative. After Browne’s first book of cogently argued epistemology, Knorr gives precedence to the “handbook” model, indicated explicitly in the title of the two longer texts in the “besondere Abhandlung” [separate treatise], the *Enchiridia* of d’Espagnet and More. The motion which determines the order of the texts is that of God coming down to earth. The focus is at first the dissemination of the divine spirit in nature, the transmission of power, life and order to corporeal matter. Once the corporeal world has been reached, the section on communication is followed by the apologetic proof of the existence of spirit in the extended world. After the “besondere Abhandlung”, books two to seven of the *Pseudodoxia* describe the opposite movement from the world of bodies to the truth of religion. The trajectory of the order of texts is thus circular. This movement is *epistrophe*, a Neoplatonic term for the movement outwards into the Many (*progressio*) followed by the return to the One (*regressus*), which indicates both the motion of the cosmos and the process of noological, or rationalist, epistemology.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Descartes R., *Meditationes in Oeuvres philosophiques* 2.181. Browne does not however represent scepticism proper, since he attempts to liberate the world from a number of misconceptions. Browne opens *Pseudodoxia* with the Platonic conception of anamnesis. We have forgotten the truth we knew by nature and eclipsed it with error: our task is to recover it again layer by layer.

<sup>70</sup> Regarding the structure and content of the individual books of the *Principia* see Gaukroger S., *Descartes’ System of Natural Philosophy* (Cambridge: 2002) esp. 54–64.

<sup>71</sup> See Hardot P., *s.v.* “conversio” in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 13 vols (Basel: 1971) 1.1033–1036.

Of Browne's self-presentation in the *Pseudodoxia* as a lightly Platonizing follower of Bacon,<sup>72</sup> Knorr thus makes an author with a primarily religious argument, whose first book provides an epistemo-critical prologue to hermetically defined metaphysics and cosmology. D'Espagnet provides the link from the absolute Unity, God, down to individual creatures. Leibniz follows, taking on the burden of explaining the transmission of motion and the structure of individual particles, before More, after addressing the question of the mechanics of movement, finally provides the necessary religious proviso: the spiritual origin of all movement and change. And only after all of this do Browne's remaining six books follow, passing from metals, through plants and animals, to human beings, their images and their history.

This intricate reorientation of the significance of *Pseudodoxia* results from the particular nature of Knorr's translation, which consists in the creation of a new text through the arrangement of translations, all in allusion and contradistinction to the "counter-text" of the Cartesian *Principia*. Thus Knorr presents his readers – even through his use of Descartes – with his anti-Descartes.

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<sup>72</sup> Browne's Platonism, or rather Neoplatonism appears to be less pronounced in the *Pseudodoxia* than in his other works (see Nathanson L., *The Strategy of Truth: A Study of Sir Thomas Browne* (Chicago: 1967) 11–55). On the relationship between *Pseudodoxia* and Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* see Robin Robbins's introduction to Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* 1.xxxi–xxxiv, and Hack-Molitor G., *On Tiptoe in Heaven* 113–125.

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“THE BEST PILLAR OF THE ORDER OF SIR FRANCIS”:  
THOMAS BROWNE, SAMUEL HARTLIB AND  
COMMUNITIES OF LEARNING

Kathryn Murphy

In *Religio Medici*, Thomas Browne described the sharing of knowledge and scholarship as ‘the cheapest way of beneficence’. Tightfistedness in this regard was ‘the sordidest piece of covetousnesse’. ‘I make not therefore my head a grave’, he claimed, ‘but a treasure of knowledge; I intend no Monopoly, but a Community in learning’.<sup>1</sup> Even if Browne’s self-portrait as a public dispensary was meant to be taken in a ‘soft and flexible sense’,<sup>2</sup> the establishment of an actual treasury of knowledge or community in learning was actively pursued by some of his contemporaries, in particular Samuel Hartlib (c. 1600–1662) and his collaborators. Hartlib, an exile from Polish Prussia, settled in England in 1628, and had by the late 1630s established a network of correspondents and “intelligencers” on developments in learning and technology.<sup>3</sup> The aim of this information gathering was no ‘Monopoly’, and Hartlib tirelessly devoted time and funds to distributing the information he harvested. His diary of 1634 records his intention ‘to investigate all manuscripts, and encourage correspondence with all excellent Men’,<sup>4</sup> and in 1650 he confessed he found himself ‘obliged to becom a conduit pipe [of

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<sup>1</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: 1964) 58.

<sup>2</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 2.

<sup>3</sup> For the significance of the phrase “commonwealth of learning” and on Hartlib’s publicizing activities generally, see Greengrass M., “Samuel Hartlib and the commonwealth of learning”, in Barnard J. – McKenzie D.F. (eds.), *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume 4: 1557–1695* (Cambridge: 2002) 304–322.

<sup>4</sup> The Latin original reads: ‘Omnia Ms. investigare et Correspondentiam fovere apud omnes Viros excellentes’. *The Hartlib Papers*, Sheffield University Library, CD-Rom edition (Ann Arbor MI: 1993); 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: 1995): *Ephemerides* 1634, 29/2/30A. References to the Hartlib papers will be prefaced by *HP* and follow the referencing system of the electronic archive, according to bundle and page number. Letters, where the names of correspondents are clear from context, will be referred to by the initials of sender and recipient and the date, where known. On Hartlib’s diaries see Clucas S., “Samuel Hartlib’s Ephemerides, 1635–1659, and the Pursuit of Scientific and Philosophical Manuscripts: The Religious Ethos of an Intelligencer”, *Seventeenth Century* 7 (1991) 33–55.

the Observations and Experiences of others] [...] towards the Publick'.<sup>5</sup> Although he made no observational or technical contributions of his own, throughout his life Hartlib promoted the advancement of learning through the encouragement, facilitation and publication of the efforts of others. At various times, these general aims coalesced in projects for the foundation of public institutions. His promotion of a "Universal College of the Learned", literally a community in learning, which would bring together scholars and experts to pursue the perfection of knowledge to the general benefit of mankind, was particularly vociferous in the early 1640s.<sup>6</sup> This phrase appears in John Gauden's (1600–1662) fast sermon before Parliament of 29 November 1640, which contained a direct plea for financial support for the establishment of such a college by Hartlib and his collaborators Jan Amos Comenius (1592–1670) and John Dury (1596–1680).<sup>7</sup> From 1646 he endeavoured to establish an "Office of Address", a 'Correspondencie and Agencie [...] for the Advancement of Universal Learning and all manner of Arts and Ingenuities': a state-sponsored intellectual bourse and repository of all useful knowledge, technical and practical as well as scholarly.<sup>8</sup> Though neither College nor Office came to fruition, the survival of many of the papers Hartlib amassed in the preparation and promotion of his schemes, including extensive correspondence and working diaries, and various tracts, pamphlets and manuscripts, testifies to the extended commonwealth of learning and networks of intellectual exchange in England and on the Continent, and is an enormous boon for scholars of seventeenth-century intellectual culture.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Hartlib S., "Preface to the Reader" in Weston R., *A Discours of husbandrie* (London: 1650) sig. A4<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> The standard account of these projects is to be found in Webster C., *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626–1660* (London: 1975), references here to the second edition (Bern: 2002) 47–66.

<sup>7</sup> Gauden J., *The Love of Truth and Peace* (London: 1641) 41.

<sup>8</sup> HP 14/2/3/3A. See also Webster C., *Great Instauration* 66–76.

<sup>9</sup> The papers were rediscovered by George Turnbull in 1933. Too many scholars have benefited from the archive to list in detail here, but see, in addition to works already cited, Turnbull G., *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius: Gleanings from Hartlib's Papers* (London: 1947), references hereafter to HDC; Trevor-Roper H., "Three Foreigners: The Philosophers of the Puritan Revolution" in *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change and other essays* (London: 1967) 237–293; Leslie M. – Raylor T. (eds.), *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land* (Leicester: 1992); Greengrass M. – Leslie M. – Raylor T. (eds.), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge: 1994).

That Browne's writings sometimes touched on the tropes of communities in learning associated with these enterprises is unsurprising, and chimes with recent accounts of Browne's writings in the context of early modern discourses of civility and the exchange of knowledge.<sup>10</sup> What is more unexpected is the association of Browne with such projects in the minds of Hartlib and his correspondents. The familiar image of Browne as an Anglican with strong Royalist sympathies, whose political commitments were submerged under his abhorrence of conflict, has placed him outside the reformist, Puritan and radical tendencies of Hartlib's projects and associates.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, despite criticism of Browne under the banner of reader-response theory, the attention paid to the responses of actual readers has been partial.<sup>12</sup> This essay explores Browne's status as a learned authority in the Hartlib archive, and his unexpected relevance to Hartlib's projects for communities in learning, and more widely to that province of the intellectual commonwealth of the 1640s and 1650s represented by Hartlib and his correspondents.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> On Browne and civility see Preston C., *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: 2005) and Moon A., "Strategies of civil discourse in seventeenth-century ethical and scientific writing: the example of Sir Thomas Browne", unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London: 2006).

<sup>11</sup> The original account of Browne's Royalism is Wilding M., "Religio Medici in the English Revolution" in Patrides C.A. (ed.), *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne: The Ann Arbor Tercentenary Lectures and Essays* (Columbia, MO and London: 1982) 100–114, for recent examples, see Berensmeyer I., "Rhetoric, Religion, and Politics in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*", *Studies in English Literature* 46 (2006) 113–132, and the essays by Kevin Killeen and Philip Major in this volume.

<sup>12</sup> Stanley Fish's "The Bad Physician: The Case of Sir Thomas Browne" in *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley, CA and London: 1972) 353–373 registers the reading response of an exasperated twentieth-century critic. See the introduction to this volume, p. 9 fn. 25, for a list of studies of Browne's reception.

<sup>13</sup> Connections between Hartlib and Browne have not hitherto been thoroughly investigated. Gisela Hack-Molitor concludes that 'despite all the Hartlib Circle and Thomas Browne had in common, [...] there was no demonstrable contact between them' ('Trotz aller Gemeinsamkeiten gab es zwischen dem Hartlib-Kreis und Thomas Browne [...] keine nachweisbaren Kontakte'; 'On Tiptoe in Heaven: Mystik und Reform im Werk von Sir Thomas Browne (1605–1682)' (Heidelberg: 2001) 51). Josef Poličenský made the bald assertion that Hartlib was in contact with Thomas Browne, but substantiated it only with reference to a letter from Comenius which mentions Browne and is discussed in section 4 below. See "Komenský, Hartlib a anglická revoluce 17. století", *Československý časopis historický* XXVI (1978) 228–248, here 238–239. I am grateful to Kevin Killeen for drawing my attention to this article.

### 1. *A man very well studyed: Browne as Learned Authority*

Aside from two references to the unpublished manuscript of *Religio Medici* in 1640, all of the references to Browne in the Hartlib papers postdate the publication of the first edition of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* in 1646.<sup>14</sup> Browne's "Vulgar Errors" established him as a learned authority, worth bringing to bear on difficult and disputed questions of medicine and natural philosophy, and it is in this context that Browne appears most frequently in Hartlib's correspondence and papers. Hartlib himself drew the attention of some of his correspondents to Browne's writings. Cyprian Kinner (d. 1649), Hartlib's schoolmate at the Calvinist Academy at Brieg, in Silesia, and a collaborator of Comenius, responded to a letter from Hartlib in 1646 stating 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica is unknown to me and I would very much like to know what it is about'.<sup>15</sup> In 1658, Hartlib recommended the recently published *Garden of Cyrus* to Robert Boyle's (1627–1691) perusal, commenting enigmatically that 'it seems to be no ordinary book'.<sup>16</sup> The traffic in recommendations went both ways. William Rand (c. 1617–1662) wrote to Hartlib on 1 September 1651 to say:

I conceive Dr Browne of Norwich the Author of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* is a man able to give you much satisfaction in questions of that nature; as being a man not only (as I conceive) very well studyed, but that has made frequent experiments in nature bestowing much time paines & cost to that end.<sup>17</sup>

The mathematician Robert Wood (1622–1685), too, used *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* as a reference work, dismissing the 'Cordialnes and other

<sup>14</sup> See *Ephemerides* 1640 part 2, *HP* 30/4/51A–B and 1640 part 4, *HP* 30/4/67A. For the implications of Hartlib's encounter with the manuscript for the print publication of *Religio Medici* in 1642, see my "A Man of Excellent Parts": the Manuscript Readers of Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*", *Times Literary Supplement*, 5492 (4 July 2008) 14–15.

<sup>15</sup> CK to SH, from Cleve, 15 December 1646, 36/1/27A: 'Dr [sic] Pseudodoxia Epidemica ist mir vnbekandt, mochte wohl wieszen wovon dasz Buch handelte.' On Kinner, see Turnbull G., *HDC* 382–440, esp. 414–440.

<sup>16</sup> SH to RB, 13 May 1658, Boyle/18.

<sup>17</sup> WR to SH, 1 September 1651, 62/27/1A–4B, 1A. It is impossible to tell without Hartlib's end of the correspondence what 'questions of that nature', or 'that end', may have been, though they appear in a passage discussing Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont and medical publications. On Rand, who was a medical student in Leiden in the early 1650s, see Webster C., *Great Instauratio* 304–308, and for the text of his "Proposals" for the foundation of a "College of Graduate Physicians", 533–534.

supposed Mediall vertues of Gold' on the basis that they had been 'solidly confuted by Dr Browne as a vulgar Error'.<sup>18</sup>

Browne is most frequently cited in the archive by John Beale (1608–1683), an agriculturalist and close collaborator of Hartlib. In men of interests as wide as Browne and Beale, it is not surprising to discover that their concerns overlapped: experimentation with insects and animals, Baconian and hermetic philosophy, the cultivation of orchards and gardens. Beale's *Herefordshire Orchards* appeared in 1657, one year before the appearance of Browne's much less pragmatic hortulan tract, *The Garden of Cyrus*, which nonetheless manifested interest in some of the same topics concerning the generation and propagation of plants.<sup>19</sup> Beale's letters bring Browne to bear on questions of the origins of colours, witchcraft, and magnetic north, using the evidence which 'Dr Browne hath handsomly collected in his paradoxes'.<sup>20</sup> He identifies his own youthful susceptibility to the 'Arabian Heresy' with Browne's similar confession in *Religio Medici*, suggesting that each had been 'weakened' by 'some principles of natural philosophy'.<sup>21</sup> His appreciation of Browne's style is clear in a comment denying that the TB who wrote the prefatory epistle to a translation of Johann Schröder's *Zoologia: or, The history of Animals as they are useful in physick and chirurgery* (London: 1659), could be Thomas Browne of Norwich on the grounds that, though 'prettily Cynical', the style was 'too lowe & rough for Dr Browne'.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps Beale's suspicions of the *Zoologia* were aroused by the appearance two years earlier of the apocryphal *Nature's Cabinet Unlock'd* (London: 1657),

<sup>18</sup> Wood R., "Memorandum concerning Coinage", *HP* 18/14/1A.

<sup>19</sup> On Beale see Stubbs M., "John Beale, Philosophical Gardener of Herefordshire Part I. Prelude to the Royal Society (1608–1663)", *Annals of Science* 39 (1982) 463–489 and "John Beale, Philosophical Gardener of Herefordshire Part II. The Improvement of Agriculture and Trade in the Royal Society (1663–1683)", *Annals of Science* 46 (1989) 323–363; and Leslie M., "The Spiritual Husbandry of John Beale" in T. Laylor – M. Leslie (eds.), *Culture and Cultivation* 151–172. See also Claire Preston's essay in this volume, and her *Thomas Browne* 175–210.

<sup>20</sup> JB to John Worthington, 12 June 1658, *HP* Yale/2, Copy Letter in Scribal Hand A, ref: The James Marshal and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Document 2. See also JB to SH, 18 January 1658, *HP* 51/56A and 21 May 1658, *HP* 52/61B.

<sup>21</sup> JB to SH, 27 September 1658, *HP* 51/21A. The Arabian heresy, also known as the mortalist heresy, was the belief that the soul died with the body to be resurrected at the Day of Judgement, which Browne confesses to having held in *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 8. For Browne's opinions in the wider context of seventeenth-century mortalism, see Williamson G., "Milton and the mortalist heresy", *Studies in Philology* 32 (1935) 553–579, here 553–555.

<sup>22</sup> John Beale, "Memo on medicine & surgery", 11 February 1659, 51/74A.

whose title-page claimed it was the work of 'Tho. Browne D. of Physick'. A copy survives with Beale's signature.<sup>23</sup>

His enthusiasm was evidently both zealous and infectious: one Peter Smith (dates unknown), Beale's nephew and another agriculturalist, sent a letter in 1651 thanking him for some books. Smith begs Beale:

if you have any thing else of Dr. Browne I beseech you will please to impart it for I account him the best pillar of the order of Sir Francis, which seemes now like the middle region best to fixe the principles of Paracelsus & Aristotle which without this medium fall into great distempers.<sup>24</sup>

Smith glosses Browne's eclecticism and syncretism favourably, as a compromise between extremes in the interpretation of nature. Among individuals devoted to the Baconian advancement of learning, 'the best pillar of the order of Sir Francis' is high praise, and positions Browne firmly at the centre of that common endeavour.

## 2. *Thomas Smith's 'epistolary traffique'*

Browne was not only read, respected and mutually recommended among Hartlib's correspondents: their circles of acquaintance included some of the same men. Among their more prominent mutual acquaintances or correspondents were John Evelyn (1620–1706), John Aubrey (1626–1697), Henry Oldenburg (1619–1677), Elias Ashmole (1617–1692), and Bishop Joseph Hall (1574–1656).<sup>25</sup> The letters exchanged by both men with the more obscure Thomas Smith (1625–1661) of Christ's College, Cambridge, provide the most direct link between them.<sup>26</sup> Smith broached a correspondence with Browne in a letter of 21 December 1645 through the mediation of their mutual friend

<sup>23</sup> Beale signed the copy now in the Special Collections Department of Glasgow University Library at shelfmark Monro 189 twice on the final inner flyleaf. The first edition of *Urne-Buriall* and *Garden of Cyrus*, published together in 1658, included a page entitled "The Stationer to the Reader" which disclaimed Browne's authorship of *Nature's Cabinet Unlock'd*. It was in fact a translation of the fifth book of Johannes Magirus's *Physiologiae Peripateticae* (Frankfurt: 1624).

<sup>24</sup> PS.JB, 11 April 1650, HP 67/23/2A.

<sup>25</sup> For Browne's relationship with Joseph Hall, see the essays by Kevin Killeen and Philip Major in this volume.

<sup>26</sup> On Smith, see Peile J., *A Biographical Register of Christ's College, 1505–1905*, 2 vols (Cambridge: 1910) 1.468.

Henry Power, asking for advice on reading and medical treatments.<sup>27</sup> He praised *Religio Medici* effusively:

I never met w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Articles of any Religion, w<sup>ch</sup> I could better subscribe to than to yours. I can as little digest Fr. Cheynel as Card. Bellarmine, & can without indignation peruse y<sup>e</sup> Alcoran or y<sup>e</sup> Talmud. I was never yet so haereticall as to be frighted w<sup>th</sup> booke those horrible μορμολυκεῖα [hobgoblins], I can live w<sup>th</sup> pleasure among y<sup>e</sup> dead though they stinke, & dye among y<sup>e</sup> living yea be buried among y<sup>m</sup>, & not feare biting.

Smith's simultaneous impatience with two controversial writers of opposing camps, the Presbyterian Francis Cheynell (1608–1665) and the Jesuit Cardinal Bellarmine (1542–1621), is a clear echo of Browne's position on the polemical extremes of Reformation and counter-Reformation: 'I condemne not all things in the Councell of *Trent*, nor approve all in the Synod of *Dort* [...] I borrow not the rules of my Religion from *Rome* or *Geneva*, but the dictates of my owne reason'.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that, with Peter Smith, Thomas Smith locates Browne firmly in the 'middle ground'. His parallelisms and oppositions, the mixture of exotic, learned or arcane vocabulary with the plain, the espousal of a *via media* between Puritanism and Catholicism, and the clauses repeatedly introduced by the first person pronoun plainly represent the sincerest form of flattery, even if they fall short of a convincing imitation of Browne's style.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Bodleian MS Rawl. D391 f.65, TS to TB, St. Thomas's Day. Though no year is supplied, this can be established by reference to other correspondence. The letter is printed in Browne T., *Sir Thomas Browne's Works*, ed. S. Wilkin, 4 vols (London and Norwich: 1835–1836) 1.359. Wilkin misidentified Smith as the Thomas Smith who was later assistant to the astronomer John Flamsteed. Both Wilkin and Geoffrey Keynes, who does not print the letter but mentions it in a footnote, date it to the winter of 1646/7, picking up a reference in a letter from Henry Power of 10 February 1647 which encloses some lines by 'a worthy friend' (Browne T., *Works*, ed. G. Keynes, 2nd ed., 4 vols (London: 1964) 4.259 n. 1). However, Power's previous letter of 13 June 1646 opens 'I could not overslippe those kind respects, & faire expressions you pleasd to shew towards me in Mr Smiths Letter' (*Works* ed. Keynes, 4.256). Browne was evidently already corresponding with Smith in the summer of 1646, and the 'worthy friend' of February 1647 must be someone else.

<sup>28</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 5–6.

<sup>29</sup> The adoption of a *via media* is endemic in *Religio Medici*, and Thomas Smith is clearly recalling its cadences, e.g. Browne's 'there appears to mee as much divinity in Galen his books *De usu partium*, as in Suarez Metaphysics' (Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 14). Other parallels include Smith's profession of familiarity with corpses, plainly indebted to Browne's comments on anatomy: 'I thanke God I have not those strait ligaments, or narrow obligations to the world, as to dote on life, or be convulst and tremble at the name of death: Not that I am insensible of the dread and horrour thereof, or by raking into the bowells of the deceased, continuall sight of Anatomies, Skeletons, or Cadaverous reliques, like Vesilloes, or Grave-makers, I am become stupid,

There is more to be gleaned from Smith's letter about the contemporary attention paid to Browne than appreciation of the salient aspects of his style, however. The suggestion that Browne's religion has 'articles' indicates, even if sycophantically, that *Religio Medici* was read for its theology, confirmed in Smith's remark that 'I once penned a large sheete of Observations upon that exact manual of yours w<sup>ch</sup> o<sup>ur</sup> Greeke Professour copied out, & I & other scholars were once about to learne memoriter'. 'Exact manual' seems a more apt description of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* than of *Religio Medici*, and we know that *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* was recommended as reading for Cambridge students. However, the dating of Smith's letter to late 1645 means that *Religio Medici* must be intended here, since *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* was first published in the summer of 1646.<sup>30</sup> The Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge in 1645 was James Duport (1606–1679), who later put his approval of Browne on record in a poem published in his *Musae subsecivae*.<sup>31</sup> This unexpected mark of pedagogical enthusiasm for Browne at the highest level in the University of Cambridge emphasizes that some contemporary readers, at least, read *Religio Medici* not in the 'soft and flexible sense' proposed by Browne's preface, nor with Stanley Fish's frustration at the elevation of style over substance, but with serious engagement.

Smith seems to have been cultivating an intellectual correspondence in this period, since his first extant letter to Hartlib dates from October 1647. Smith has been described as a 'learned and pugnacious man', and it is the second epithet which is clearer in his correspondence with Har-

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or have forgot the apprehension of mortality, but that marshalling all the horours, and contemplating the extremities thereof, I finde not any thing therein able to daunt the courage of a man, much lesse a well resolved Christian' (37).

<sup>30</sup> *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* is recommended in the manuscript 'Directions for a Student at the Université', ascribed to Richard Holdsworth (1590–1649), fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge from 1613–1620, and master of Emmanuel College, Cambridge from 1637–1643. The manuscript is preserved in Emmanuel College Library at shelfmark MS 1.2.27(1). Holdsworth was ejected from his mastership in 1643 and did not return to the university before his death. Since this predates the publication of *Pseudodoxia*, it seems unlikely that Holdsworth recommended it to students himself; probably some later copier added it. On Holdsworth's 'Directions', see Webster C., *Great Instauratiōn 133; Curtis M.H., Oxford and Cambridge in Transition 1558–1642* (Oxford: 1959) 131–134 and 289–290. The 'Directions' are printed as 'Appendix 2' in Fletcher H.F., *The Intellectual Development of John Milton*, 2 vols (Urbana, IL: 1961) 2.624–655.

<sup>31</sup> On Duport, see Curtis M.H., *Oxford and Cambridge* 113–116. Duport's poem is entitled 'Ad. Cl. Virum, D. Thomam Brounum, Equitem, & Doctorem Medicum, De sua Religione Medici, & Pseudodoxia Epidemica' in *Musae subsecivae, seu poemata stromata* (Cambridge: 1676) 210–211.

tlb.<sup>32</sup> Although he recognizes that information about ‘books editis vel edendis [published or to be published]’ are ‘the usual subject’ for letters to and from Hartlib, and presumably the reason he had engaged in the correspondence in the first place, Smith finds little space for such literary intelligence between accounts of his misfortunes in Cambridge, railing at the ingratitude of his colleagues, and pleas for Hartlib’s intercession with Samuel Bolton (1606–1654), the head of his college.<sup>33</sup> Smith’s assumption that Hartlib, who had spent some time in Cambridge in the 1620s, would be a weighty supporter in such matters testifies to the esteem in which he was held in academic circles. On occasion, Smith’s demands overstepped the mark: on 30 October 1648, he was forced to ‘confesse I was too bold’ in his previous letter, hoping that ‘necessity’ might alter ‘the denomination of impudence’.<sup>34</sup> His abilities as an intelligencer must have been unsatisfactory, even where he succeeded in tearing himself from his own problems. On 22 September 1648, after a full page of complaint at his treatment by Bolton, he adds: ‘Concerning books editis vel edendis [...] I know of none’.<sup>35</sup> On 30 October 1648 he reports that Meric Casaubon (1599–1671) intended to publish four texts, ‘one de 4 linguis, a 2d de ortu vocis, a 3d de idololatria the 4th I have forgot’: he must hedge his information with ‘if my memory mistake not’. The same letter, for the first time in the extant correspondence, informs Hartlib of Smith’s acquaintance with Thomas Browne:

Last weeke I heard from Dr Browne of Norwich the author of that singular piece *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, who tells me he is setting it forth againe with an addition that may be halfe as much as the former booke. If I find time & opportunity to write to him againe I shall wish he would take the paines of riting the booke & chapters in the margin, & adding an index if he thinke fit.

He adds the names of various medical textbooks Browne has recommended, but concludes ‘[b]ut I doubt I trouble your serious affaires with relation of such things as you were before acquainted with. If so, I hope I shall obtain your pardon’.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Peile J., *Biographical Register* 1,468.

<sup>33</sup> There are 15 letters extant in the Hartlib archive, covering the period 18 October 1647–3 September 1651. The bulk are concerned with Smith’s problems with his institutional superiors. The quotation here is from TS to SH, 22 September 1648, 15/6/18A. For Bolton see Peile J., *Biographical Register* 369.

<sup>34</sup> TS to SH, 30 October 1648, 15/6/20A–21B, 15/6/20A.

<sup>35</sup> TS to SH, 22 September 1648, *HP* 15/6/18A.

<sup>36</sup> TS to SH, 30 October 1648, *HP* 15/16/20A.

Despite the fawning tone of his original letter to Browne, Smith conveys to Hartlib a lower opinion of Browne's significance to the intellectual world, betraying either a suspicion that Hartlib would be of the same opinion or the wish to sound him out. He fails to conceal his irritation at navigational inadequacies in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, doubts that Hartlib needs his recommendations, and apparently values Browne's correspondence so little that he cannot know if he will ever be bothered to write to him again. In this, he evidently underestimated Hartlib's interest in Browne. On 20 November, Smith writes again, opening his letter: '[a]s soone as I received your kind letter with so many markes of your affection I transmitted some of the enclosed to Norwich, & now returne you humble thankes for all'.<sup>37</sup> That 'Norwich' stands metonymically for Browne is confirmed when Smith reports having 'desired Dr. Browne's judgement concerning Dr Kinner'. Possibly at Hartlib's prompting, Smith had found both 'time and opportunity' to write to Browne, and thus sets himself up as a conduit pipe between London and Norwich. Though it is possible that Smith simply asked Browne what he thought of Cyprian Kinner, in 1648 Hartlib had borne the expenses for publication of Sir William Petty's (1623–1687) translation of Kinner's *Continuation of Mr. John-Amos-Comenius school-endeavours* (London: 1648), which declared its participation in the community of learning in one of its alternative titles: 'The way and method of teaching exposed to the ingenuous and free censure of all piously-learned men'. Although no copy appears in the catalogue of Browne's library sold in 1711, the respect he received elsewhere in the Hartlib archive suggests that he would have been thought to fall under such a rubric, and it is therefore likely that Kinner's *Continuation* was enclosed by Hartlib in his letter to Smith. Though we have no record what 'Dr. Browne's judgement' may have been, it was certainly sought and valued.

It is also impossible to know what other items – books or information – Smith transmitted to Norwich, or whether Hartlib had explicitly asked that they be forwarded. It is likely, however, that Hartlib would have been interested in broaching some contact with Browne. The quiescence and ecumenism of *Religio Medici* may not have inspired him, but *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, partly fulfilling Francis Bacon's (1561–1626) *desideratum* in the *Aduancement of Learning* for a 'Kalendar of popular Errors, [...] in naturall Historie such as passe in speech and conceit', was

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<sup>37</sup> TS to SH, 30 October 1648, *HP* 15/6/20A–21B.

certainly the kind of restorative project Hartlib would have encouraged, and did in fact recommend to Kinner.<sup>38</sup> Hartlib's interest in the progress of the second edition of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* is not only shown by his inferred response to Smith's letter, but in a comment in his diary: 'Dr Brown of Norwich in his 2d enlarged Edition of Vulgar Errors to bee examined whether hee hath not brought in (which hee might have done) of that which Dr Primrose hath written on the same subject'.<sup>39</sup> 'Might have done' because, via Smith, Hartlib had drawn his attention to something he felt was lacking? Although any direct attempt by Hartlib to influence the progress of the second edition is now impossible to trace, the degree of separation between Hartlib and Browne seems narrowest here. At least once, through the mediation of Thomas Smith, Hartlib and Browne made indirect contact.

### 3. *The Order of Sir Francis*

If Hartlib did contribute suggestions to *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, he would only have been following Browne's prompting in his introduction "To the Reader", which encouraged any 'worthy Enlarger'

whose experimentall and Iudicious knowledge shall solemnly looke upon [*Pseudodoxia Epidemica*]; not onely to destroy of ours, but to establish of his owne, not to traduce or extenuate, but to explaine, and dilucidate, to adde and ampliate, according to the laudable custome of the Ancients in their sober promotions of Learning.<sup>40</sup>

There is some evidence that the second edition did indeed gain from the cheap beneficence of the community in learning. Smith's pleas for a more user-friendly *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* were met in the second edition, which provided marginal references and an index. An "Advertisement concerning the Marginall Annotations" signed only with the initials 'N.N.' stated that 'some strange hand hath attempted (yet sparingly,

<sup>38</sup> Bacon F., *The Aduancement of Learning*, ed. M. Kiernan (Oxford: 2000) 91.

<sup>39</sup> Hartlib refers to James Primerose's *De vulgi erroribus in medicina* (London: 1638). Browne had in fact already referred to Primerose in the first edition, acknowledging his omission of most of his already published material – 'though not many years past, Dr. Primrose hath made a learned & full Discourse of Errors in Physick, yet have we discussed but two or three thereof' (*Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (London: 1646) sig. A5). Hartlib had either failed to notice this, or expected a more thorough engagement.

<sup>40</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. R. Robbins, 2 vols (Oxford: 1981) 1.4.

and but here and there,) to affix Annotations on the Margin'.<sup>41</sup> The identity of 'N.N.' and of the 'strange hand' remain undetermined (the initials, standing for "*nomen nescio*", were standard for anonyms), and they need not have concealed Smith to prove that the new edition of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* was, in some ways at least, a collaborative effort. Other readers likewise felt the urge to explain and delucidate, to add and amplify. Christopher Wren (1589–1658), Dean of Windsor and father of the architect, heavily underlined and annotated almost every page of his copy of the first edition, while Christian Knorr von Rosenroth (1631–1689), whose German translation of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* was published in 1680, expanded Browne's text with observations of his own and the interpolation of various other works he deemed to be of interest.<sup>42</sup> In 1647 Henry Bate (*fl.* 1640–1647) wrote a long fan letter to Browne, telling him that on the publication of *Pseudodoxia*, he 'was readie to present an Hecatomb in thankfulnes', since he, too, 'had beene long in quest after most of those particulars, & lamented y<sup>e</sup> confident mistakes and wormeaten errours of y<sup>e</sup> age'. He continues:

when you S<sup>r</sup> lent mee your hand, I was rauisht with ioy and could haue wisht I had been happy in y<sup>e</sup> Parents acquaintance before y<sup>e</sup> child was borne. For my owne Observations and Collections [...] I knew not well how to preserue them; but now I thank you, you haue showd mee a way, by laying them up in your vrne [...] And might I S<sup>r</sup> auoid the name of an Intruder, I would tell you how; I made bold to Interleafe your Enquiries, and soe insert my blank and empty phansies, vnder the protection of your blanck and cleuer iudgment, soe hope & preserue my litle bird in y<sup>e</sup> lap of Jupiter [...] S<sup>r</sup> had you intent of another Edition, of which some probabilitie I see, y<sup>e</sup> turning ouer of those thoughts of mine and adiistant collections, might probably *aut prodesse volunt aut delectare*, and if either they shall bee at your command.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, 2nd ed. (London: 1650) sig. B1<sup>v</sup>; reprinted in Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.147.

<sup>42</sup> Wren's copy is preserved in the Bodleian Library at shelfmark O2.26 Art.Seld.; see Colie R., "Dean Wren's Marginalia and Early Science at Oxford", *Bodleian Library Record* VI/4 (1960) 541–551. Knorr's translation was published as *Des vortrefflichen Engel-länders Thomas Browne [...] Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (Frankfurt: 1680). See Eric Achermann's essay in this volume.

<sup>43</sup> HB to TB, 'from the Court at Greenwich', 28 August 1647, Bodleian MS Rawl D391, ff.79–80, here ff.79<sup>v</sup>–80<sup>r</sup>. Bate's copy of *Pseudodoxia*, if it survives, has not come to light. 'Aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare [poetae]' is a quotation from Horace, *Ars poetica* l. 333: '[Poets] wish either to be of use or to delight'.

It is not known if this book ever did come into Browne's hands, or if any of Bates's observations either contributed to the second edition or were of use or delight to Browne. But the proffer of collaboration was in the spirit of Browne's depiction of his endeavour in the letter to the reader. Aware of the scale of his undertaking, Browne suggests that

a worke of such concernment unto truth, and difficulty in it selfe, did well deserve the conjunction of many heads: And surely more advantageous had it beene unto Truth, to have fallen into the endeavours of some cooperating advancers, that might have performed it to the life, and added authority thereto.<sup>44</sup>

The appeal to 'cooperating advancers' gestures directly towards the schemes and rhetoric of collaborative and Baconian reform of knowledge which marked Hartlib's activities in the 1630s and 1640s, and the respect in which Browne was held after the publication of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* in 1646. Richard Whitlock (1616–1666), writing in 1654, remarks on hacks like Alexander Ross (1591–1654), indefatigable critic of Browne, who believe that 'Inke must earn Ale, and three Penny Ordinaries; write they must against *Things* or *Men* [...] Sparing neither *Bacons*, *Harveys*, *Digbys*, *Brownes*, or any the like of *Improvement COLLEDGE*'.<sup>45</sup>

In 1658 John Evelyn imagined

a society of the *Paradisi Cultores*, persons of antient simplicity, Paradisean and Hortulan saints, [...] a society of learned & ingenuous men, such as Dr. Browne, by whome we might hope to redeeme the tyme that has bin lost.<sup>46</sup>

Each of these references gestures towards a collegiate institution of learned men working for the advancement and restoration of learning. The blueprint for such schemes was Bacon's Salomon's House, or the College of the Six Days' Works, outlined in his utopian *New Atlantis*.<sup>47</sup> Peter Smith's celebration of Browne in this vein as 'the best pillar of the order of Sir Francis' is neatly ambiguous. On the one hand, Browne is

<sup>44</sup> Browne T., *Pseudodoxia* ed. Robbins, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Whitlock R., *Zootomia, or Observations on the Present Manners of the English* (London: 1654) 232.

<sup>46</sup> JE to TB, 28 January 1658 in Browne T., *Works*, ed. Keynes, 4.275. Evelyn's 'redeeme the tyme' is a reference to Ephesians 5.15–16: '15. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, 16. Redeeming the time, because the days are evil' and Colossians 4.5: 'Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time'.

<sup>47</sup> First published posthumously in Bacon F., *Sylua syluarum: or A naturall historie. In ten centuries* (London: 1626 [1627]). The best account of proposals for such colleges is to be found in Webster, *Great Instauration* 32–99, esp. 47–51.

a supporting column of the edifice of learning, made according to the architectural ‘order’ of Francis Bacon, an image which may have been suggested by the pillars of Hercules depicted on the title-pages of Bacon’s *Instauratio magna* (London: 1620) and *Sylua syluarum* (London: 1626). On the other, punning on Bacon’s first name shared with the founder of the Franciscans, Browne is an upright member of an intellectual and quasi-monastic community on the model of Salomon’s House.

#### 4. *Browne in Polish Prussia*

Despite the association of Browne in the minds of his contemporaries with these ideal societies and colleges, his ‘Community in learning’ in *Religio Medici* and the collaborative model of encyclopaedic writing in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* suggest not a research institution, but the civil exchange of scholarship conducted through letters and the dedications and elaboration of printed works: the humanist republic of learning. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find *Religio Medici* used as an endorsement in proposals for the actual foundation of universal colleges and gatherings of learned men in Poland and England in the 1640s. For Hartlib and Jan Amos Comenius a universal college was more than a trope of civility: they actively designed and promoted such an institution.<sup>48</sup> The foundation of a college was one of Comenius’s main aims in travelling to England in 1641. He and Hartlib discussed possible locations (Winchester, Chelsea, or the Savoy) and personnel, and in his *Via lucis*, written during in England in 1641–1642, but not published until 1668 in Amsterdam when it was dedicated to the Royal Society, he outlined his proposals for a college to be founded in England, partly in homage to Bacon. The worsening political situation of 1642 made it clear that the time was not right for the establishment of stable scholarly institutions. Comenius left for the Continent in June, settling for some years in Elbing (now Elblag, Poland), Hartlib’s home

<sup>48</sup> Hartlib, although continuing intermittently with such schemes throughout the 1640s and 1650s, appears to have predicted their failure early, writing in *Ephemerides* 1640 part 4: ‘The way to advance learning is not to get a Collegium of Learned Men together and to set them to elaborat certain works. This is subject to too many inconveniencys of ambition jealousy lazines and every way to the abuse of such a benefit. But rather to observe the predominant genius of Men and where they stick to helpe them in’ (HP 30/4/61A).

town in Polish Prussia.<sup>49</sup> In 1646, he wrote to Hartlib suggesting that, since ‘times are beginning to change for the better and are taking on a new aspect’, proposals for a universal college might be reopened.<sup>50</sup> With his letter, Comenius sent a short text which he hoped might be of use in introducing the idea in England: ‘A personal opinion (submitted by Georg Vechner, Doctor of Theology, to J.A. Comenius, before the Conference at Thorn) concerning a special synod for the perfection of Pansophia’.<sup>51</sup> Vechner’s “consilium” begins with a quotation in which endorsement for a synod on the reformation of learning was drawn not, as one might expect, from the works of Francis Bacon, but from Thomas Browne’s *Religio Medici*.

Georg Vechner (1590–1647) was like Comenius a religious exile from the Czech lands.<sup>52</sup> The immediate context for his advice to Comenius was a ‘*colloquium charitativum*’ – friendly conference – called by the King of Poland-Lithuania, Władisław IV (1595–1648, r. 1632–1648) in 1645 at Thorn, now Toruń in Poland.<sup>53</sup> Without enthusiastic commitment from any of the religious factions attending, and called together out of political exigency – Władisław hoped to form an established Polish Church to strengthen the national rather than the religious allegiances of his subjects – it seemed to Comenius not only pointless but counter-productive, and an obstacle to the progress of pansophia.<sup>54</sup> He spent the months preceding the *colloquium* seeking an excuse not to attend, and left almost immediately after its opening in September 1645. When it closed in November, ecumenical rapprochement was no closer.

<sup>49</sup> See Blekastad M., *Comenius: Versuch eines Umrisses von Leben, Werk und Schicksal des Jan Amos Komenský* (Oslo: 1969) 355–418.

<sup>50</sup> JAK to SH, 25 May 1646, 7/73/1A–6B, here 7/73/4A, quoted in the translation by W.J. Hitchens.

<sup>51</sup> “Consilium peculiare (submissum a G. Vechnero Th.D. I A Comenio ante Colloq. Thor.) de synodo singulari ad pansophiam vere perficiendam”. I have slightly amended Hitchens’s translation here.

<sup>52</sup> Vechner’s background was Lutheran, but his close collaboration with Comenius saw him supported by the Unity of Brethren, Comenius’s church: from 1639 he was a preacher in their German community. For Vechner see Blekastad M., *Comenius* 226, 234; and Turnbull G., *HDC* 372.

<sup>53</sup> See Zoubek F.J., *Život Jana Amosa Komenského* (Prague: 1892) 165–167; Kvačala J., *Johann Amos Comenius: sein Leben und seine Schriften* (Leipzig: 1892) 287–292; Blekastad M., *Comenius* 398–407.

<sup>54</sup> Gericke W., *Glaubenszeugnisse und Konfessionspolitik der Brandenburgischen Herrscher bis zur Preußischen Union 1540–1815* (Bielefeld: 1977); Blekastad M., *Comenius* 402–406; [Anon.], *Acta conventus Thoroviensis, celebrati anno 1645* (Warsaw: 1646).

Vechner shared Comenius's scepticism for the *colloquium*'s success. His *adviso* begins with a quotation from Browne, which he uses to justify three proposals: that pansophia may be too large a task for one man to achieve on his own, and that it should therefore be referred to a synod; that the conference might have a better chance of success had it the establishment of such a synod, rather than religious reconciliation, as its specific purpose; and that Comenius might use the conference at Thorn to propose such a synod, thereby freeing himself of the enormous burden of single-handedly reforming all learning.<sup>55</sup> His source is the 24th section of *Religio Medici*:

Tis not a melancholy *Utinam* [i.e. an 'if only'] of mine owne, but the desire of better heads, that there were a generall Synod; not to unite the incompatible differences of Religion, but for the benefit of learning, to reduce it as it lay at first in a few and solid Authours; and to condemne to the fire those swarms and millions of *Rhapsodies*, begotten onely to distract and abuse the weaker judgements of Scholars, and to maintaine the Trade and Mystery of Typographers.<sup>56</sup>

Claire Preston recently designated this section 'a kind of thought-experiment', 'astonishingly un-Brownean', 'like a *reductio ad absurdum*'.<sup>57</sup> For Vechner, however, Browne's suggestion was evidently not absurd, but positively desirable. Browne articulates in a single sentence precisely the misgivings felt by Vechner and Comenius before the Thorn conference. They believed that education and knowledge needed to undergo a complete restoration before a reconciliation would be thinkable: a belief which Browne articulates precisely. He is explicit on giving precedence to the thorough renovation of learning over the implementation of eirenic schemes in religion, calls for a 'generall synod' which speaks to the ideals of collaboration and community in learning treasured by Comenius and his circle, and unwittingly suggests a remedy for the crippling burden of single-handedly reforming learning which Comenius had undertaken. Moreover, Browne's proposal rests not on his own

<sup>55</sup> HP 7/73/5B.

<sup>56</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 25. Vechner quotes from John Merryweather's Latin translation.

<sup>57</sup> Preston C., *Thomas Browne* 65. The section also receives direct comment in Victoria Silver's "Liberal Theology and Sir Thomas Browne's 'Soft and flexible discourse'", *English Literary Renaissance* 20 (1990) 69–105. Here the passage underlines Browne's rejection of reason, 'to underscore the extent to which we bend and distort the scriptural text to support material and topical ideas, both in order to relieve our fear of what we do not know, and to prescribe our opinions' 91.

utopian fantasy, but on the ‘desire of better heads’. What can be read in the twenty-first century as a ‘thought-experiment’ was, for Vechner, a blueprint for action.

Though early modern common-placing techniques mean the wider context of a work is not always relevant to the quotation of a particular passage, the controversy that greeted *Religio Medici* on its publication, and its relevance to Vechner and Comenius, suggests that more than the single sentence quoted needs to be taken into account. What was it about Browne’s text, written as a ‘private exercise’ in the 1630s, probably in rural Yorkshire, that resonated so clearly with a Moravian exile, teaching on the Baltic? However much Browne tried to insist on his lack of polemical intent, *Religio Medici* as published was provocative. Its first third discusses reformation, heresy, the extent of a Church’s jurisdiction over the conscience of its members, the predicament of the adherent of one confession in the country of another, the duties owed to temporal powers, and the relativity of articles of faith. In the 1640s, whether in the England of the Civil Wars or the Poland of the Thirty Years’ War, it could not fail to be read topically and controversially. In 1645 Alexander Ross published *Medicus medicatus*, a riposte to Browne whose first chapter was entitled ‘If the Papists and we are of one faith’. Ross’s answer is emphatically negative, and he offers a strained pun: ‘this may be indeed *religio Medici*, the religion of the House of *Medicis*, not of the Church of England’.<sup>58</sup> The Latin edition published at Leiden in 1644 carried a verse by Reginald Bokenham (fl. 1619–1644) which states wittily that the translated text ‘REFORMATA est, atque LATINA simul’ – having made the transition from English to Latin, it is simultaneously Reformed and Roman.<sup>59</sup> The second Latin edition, published under a false imprint in Paris in 1644, claimed that

although [Browne] professes himself publicly to be of the English church, compelled to adhere to Anglicanism against his will through the unfavourable force of birth or fortune, he is however practically Catholic. He diverges so much from the Anglican doctrine and inclines so far to the Roman, is so well-disposed towards our universal faith, dissents so slightly

<sup>58</sup> Ross A., *Medicus medicatus, or the Physicians Religion Cured* (London: 1645) 2.

<sup>59</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici*, trans. J. Merryweather (Leiden: 1644) 7. On Bokenham, also known as Bukenham or Buckenham, see Innes Smith R.W., *English-Speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden* (Edinburgh: 1932) 35.

from us, that he seems forced to persist in his few errors only through fear of the persecution raging in England.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, *Religio Medici* was placed on the Vatican's *Index librorum prohibitorum* in 1645.

The text's susceptibility to extreme praise and blame, its availability for appropriation and vilification by members of all sects of Christianity, is ironically caused by its provocative ecumenism. Browne asserts the duty of respect owed by all Christians to the Pope, as a 'temporall Prince', and states that 'we [sc. Protestants] have reformed from them [sc. Catholics], not against them':

there is between us one common name and appellation, one faith and necessary body of principles common to us both; and therefore I am not scrupulous to converse and live with them, to enter their churches in defect of ours, and either pray with them, or for them.<sup>61</sup>

The insistence on ignoring confessional differences, or rendering them irrelevant, so outrageous to Alexander Ross, is matched by a relativistic consideration of the proliferation of divisions and sects among Protestants:

As there were many Reformers, so likewise many reformatiōes; every Countrey proceeding in a particular way and Method, according as their nationall interest together with their constitution and clime inclined them, some angrily and with extremitie, others calmly, and with mediocritie, not rending, but easily dividing the community, and leaving an honest possibility of a reconciliation.<sup>62</sup>

While Hartlib and Dury exchanged anxious letters about Comenius's apparent rapprochement with Catholics in Poland,<sup>63</sup> and Alexander Ross was scandalized by Browne's tolerance of forms of worship other than that of the Church of England, the exigencies of living in Polish Prussia, where Lutherans, Calvinists, Catholics, Orthodox Christians, the Unity

<sup>60</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici*, trans. J. Merryweather ([Paris]: 1644) sig. a<sup>iiij</sup>r-v: '[...] Anglum se licet esse profiteatur, et ad sectam Anglicanam per vim malignam nativitatis aut fortunae praeter voluntatem adactum, pene tamen Catholicus est, et ita ab Anglicanā doctrinā ad Romanam deflectens ac propendens, ita ad fidem nostrum universalem compositus, ita leniter dissidens à nobis, ut metu tantū saevientis in Angliā persecutionis [...] in aliquibus adhuc aberrationibus detineri videatur.'

<sup>61</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 4.

<sup>62</sup> Browne T., *Religio Medici* ed. Martin, 5.

<sup>63</sup> See esp. JD to SH, 5 November 1643, *HP* 3/1/15A; see also 3/1/1A-2B and 3/2/4A-5B. See also Blekastad M., *Comenius* 360-370.

of Brethren and various other confessions co-existed, guaranteed that *Religio Medici* would be read through a different lens. Readers like Vechner and Comenius, involved, however reluctantly, in schemes founded on the ‘honest possibility’ of the reconciliation of confessions like the conference at Thorn, would be in a position to find its ecumenism sympathetic, while recognizing its potential for controversy.<sup>64</sup> Though Vechner thought he was reading an edition printed at Leiden, the page reference he supplies in his counsel for Comenius indicates that he in fact read the Parisian edition which claims Browne for Catholicism. The preface would have highlighted the issues of religious toleration and conciliation already unmissable in the text. Vechner’s epigraph to his counsel could thus stand as a synecdoche for the entirety of the *Religio Medici*, for its reasoned ecumenism, its eirenic and conciliatory stance.

### 5. Conclusion

When William Rand referred to Browne in a letter to Hartlib as ‘a man [...] very well studyed’, he meant that Browne himself was devoted to the investigation and study of nature, and could thus be classed as one of the learned men on whom the advancement of learning depended. But the other sense of the epithet is also clear in the image of Browne which emerges from the evidence of Hartlib’s correspondence. The mutual recommendations and casual references show that Browne was accepted and well-known as a learned authority whose works, in particular *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, could be used as reference in discussing difficult or disputed questions. It was not only *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, however, that was taken seriously. Thomas Smith’s report that he had been obliged to read *Religio Medici* in Cambridge shows that it was, in at least one instance, literally studied. The tendency now to read Browne’s mention of a ‘generall Synod’, a ‘Community in learning’, a ‘treasure of knowledge’ as empty rhetorical gestures, or tropes of learned

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<sup>64</sup> Further evidence for the importance of *Religio Medici* to the community of religious exiles in Polish Prussia is provided by citations in Francisco Marinio [Jan Sachs], *De scopo reipublicae Polonicae adversus Hermannum Conringum*, (Vratislava [Wrocław]: 1665), where passages from *Religio Medici* serve to support an argument against religious and national bigotry. Sachs (fl. 1641–1671) was Secretary of the city of Thorn in the 1660s. I am grateful to Benedict Wagner-Rundell for drawing my attention to this reference.

civility, is countered by the literalism with which he was understood by his contemporaries. The example of Vechner's *consilium*, in which a passage from *Religio Medici* supplies advice to attendees of a religious conference in Polish Prussia, before being returned to Hartlib to act as a proposal for the establishment of a public college for the advancement of learning in England, is only the most extreme and surprising instance of the appropriation of the authority of Browne's writings and name. Given Hartlib's stated aim to encourage correspondence with all excellent men, and the evident esteem in which Browne and his works were held, a complete absence of contact between them would be puzzling. The exchanges between Browne, Thomas Smith, and Hartlib offer a tantalizing glimpse of mediated contact; any more there may have been seems not to have survived. It is clear, however, that even if Browne absented himself from the centres of learned exchange, or refused direct participation in their schemes, for Hartlib and his correspondents, Browne was a notable fellow citizen in the commonwealth of learning.

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